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## **The glory of God : the Christological anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyons and Karl Barth**

Reeves, Michael

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# THE GLORY OF GOD

The Christological Anthropology of Irenaeus  
of Lyons and Karl Barth

Michael Reeves

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
KING'S COLLEGE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND OF THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2004



# Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine the manner in which anthropology is informed by Christology in the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons and Karl Barth. It does so by placing the two theologians alongside each other and examining each in turn, allowing each to illuminate the other, so providing an heuristic device to draw out and clarify the issues they address and their respective approaches and models.

Three questions are put to each in an attempt, not to constrain, but to give full space to articulate their anthropology: first, 'Who is Man?' (concerning methodology and looking to obtain a preliminary conclusion); second, 'What is Man?' (analysing the detail of what human being and becoming can then be said to be); and third 'When is Man?' (concerning the doctrine of time and man's origin, being and destiny).

In that it takes two subjects so separated in time, it should be clear that this examination is a work of systematic as opposed to historical theology. Historically they are far apart; systematically they are easily comparable. As such, not only can Irenaeus and Barth be placed side by side for examination, but they can also be brought easily into conversation with contemporary anthropological debates and concerns.

Whilst it does in fact do so, the goal of the thesis is not simply to prove the merits of Christological anthropology; instead it serves as more of an exploratory demonstration of the diverse possibilities that are available when it is affirmed that Jesus Christ is the revelation and reality of the being of man. That is, whilst the anthropologies of Irenaeus and Barth can, for all their separation in time, be shown to bear a remarkable similarity to each other because informed by Christology, they can also be shown to be striking in their differences, because informed by different Christologies. Thus, we will see, Christological anthropology cannot be accepted as an unambiguous category or single project.

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# Abbreviations

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <i>AH</i>     | Irenaeus, <i>Adversus Haereses</i> (in the numeration of Massuet)   |
| <i>Dem.</i>   | Irenaeus, <i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching</i>   |
| <i>Frag.</i>  | Irenaeus, Fragment  |
| <i>I Ap.</i>  | Justin Martyr, <i>First Apology</i>   |
| <i>II Ap.</i> | Justin Martyr, <i>Second Apology</i>  |
| <i>Dial.</i>  | Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>  |
| <i>EH</i>     | Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>   |
| <i>CD</i>     | Karl Barth, <i>Church Dogmatics</i> , vols 1-4, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; trans. G. W. Bromiley <i>et al.</i> Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956-75 |
| <i>KD</i>     | Karl Barth, <i>Die kirchliche Dogmatik</i> (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1932 and Zurich: TVZ 1938-65)   |

## Introduction

At the Ὀμφαλός, the navel of the Greek world at its classical height, stood the temple of Apollo at Delphi. On its walls was written the maxim that Socrates was to take as his own: Γνῶθι Σεαυτόν ('Know Thyself'). Thus two things were implied to the Hellenic mind: that knowledge – and knowledge of man in particular – could be acquired immanently; and that there was an insuperable distance between Olympus and Athens, between 'the immortals' and mere mortals, between God and man. Neither the pivotal role of anthropology in theology and philosophy, nor the two fundamental assumptions have disappeared.

Questions about man certainly have some claim to pre-eminence. Such was the first question ('Man, where are you?'), and such is the question automatically elicited on the meeting of God and man ('Who am I?').<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in many ways it is questions and assumptions about the identity of man (or lack of it) that shape society today, from psychology and medical ethics to the fashion industry and the 'self-realisation' movement. Yet now, as then, it is the introspection of the Delphic maxim that still dominates methodology in questions about man and his relation to God and the world around him. Feuerbach's assertion that 'knowledge of God is self-knowledge' can only be supported by the anthropological assumption that 'knowledge of man is self-knowledge'. The result is that anthropology can look much like a puppy chasing its tail, for the anthropologist is thus both the subject and the object of his own investigation. As shown by the Sphinx, man can then be something of an impossible riddle. It is no wonder that man of the third millennium finds himself so helplessly far into an identity crisis. In reaction to this, much anthropology has attempted to deal with humanity in the abstract or as the other (the remote and incomprehensible tribe that enables human understanding through the negative image of familiar customs). Such detached study, in treating man as a sample, inevitably tends to dehumanise. Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3:9; Exod. 3:11

as G. K. Chesterton stated in his perhaps most masterful work on anthropology ‘I do not believe in being dehumanised in order to study humanity’.<sup>2</sup> The intention of this study is the very opposite: by considering man, to be humanised.

The two subjects of this study, Irenaeus of Lyons and Karl Barth, each from opposite ends of post-apostolic Church history, are radical anthropologists of a very different school to Delphi. They seek to be theologians first, and to think theologically and Christianly. John Behr has noted that both were aware of, and successfully managed to avoid, the temptation ‘to use a general concept of man to explain who the second person of the Trinity is, rather than a concept of man understood in terms of what God has revealed in Jesus Christ’.<sup>3</sup> That is the revolution both offer, and the theological issue at the core of this study: ‘a concept of man understood in terms of what God has revealed in Jesus Christ’. What comes of that revolution, however, is by no means predictable. Two quite distinct, if complementary, accounts can be seen to rise from what appears at first to be a single source.

In order to appreciate those accounts and so to come to an understanding of some of the possibilities of what we shall see to be the extremely broad category of Christological anthropology, it is necessary to analyse in detail their respective contributions. This is not that we might accept either anthropology wholesale. It is that only with such thorough appraisals can we hope to avoid the ubiquitous danger of simply squeezing them into relevance to contemporary questions and debates. If they do in fact offer truly Christian anthropology, only so can we hope to avoid simply garnishing non-theological anthropology with Christian flourishes.

We will proceed in two parts, one for each theologian, each part mirroring the other and consisting of three major sections. That done, we can come to some final attempt at resolution and conclusion. Even without such final resolution, aided by their arrangement alongside each other, each should prove as illuminative of the other as of man. The three main matters dealt with in each will be: the method used and the general conclusion reached by each (approached through the question ‘Who is Man?’); the detailing of what human being (and becoming) can then be said to be (approached through the question ‘What is Man?’); and finally, the temporal framework within which man finds his origin, being and destiny (approached through the question ‘When is Man?’). It should become apparent through the course of the thesis that the three questions do not simply form the three strands of some crude artificial net that fails to

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<sup>2</sup> Chesterton, G. K., *The Everlasting Man* (repr. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 23

<sup>3</sup> Behr, J., ‘The Word of God in the Second Century’ *Pro Ecclesia* IX, 1 (2000), 85-107, 86

gather all the relevant information whilst distorting what it does collect; instead, these are the questions that both theologians effectively instruct the reader to ask.

Two words of explanation before we begin: first, where possible, we have retained the traditional translation of Irenaeus' *homo/ἄνθρωπος* and Barth's *Mensch* by 'man', and not substituted it for the gender-neutral term 'human being'. Whilst, no doubt, this will cause some unease to many, this is done in order that we might be more sensitive to the anthropology (and the understanding of gender) they both actually present, a fact which, it is hoped, should become increasingly clear. As a provisional comfort we can note that in neither does this amount to anything like a marginalisation of femininity; nor is it so simple as to say that, for either theologian, *homo/ἄνθρωπος* or *Mensch* is paradigmatically male.

Second, what may appear to be the extraordinary and unjustifiable straddling of eighteen centuries by a concentration on subjects from the second and twentieth is, in fact, the strength of the study. For, whilst needing to take account of their respective historical situations, this is not an historical survey but a systematic study. The proof can only lie in the pudding, yet already we might note that the applicability of the same questions to both itself demonstrates the commensurate nature of Irenaeus' and Barth's relevant material, showing the validity and value of placing them alongside each other. Read on their own, each is undeniably enlightening in their proposal for a Christological anthropology; yet the very differences of context as much as response enable both to set each other off to even greater effect, each helping to draw attention to both the strengths and the weaknesses of the other, in so doing revealing how variously Christology can inform anthropology. It is through two eyes that we will be able to see more clearly the promise of Christological anthropology.

**PART I:**  
**IRENÆUS**



## 1

Who is Man?<sup>1</sup>

## The Gnostic Dissolution of Man

The movement in the early post-apostolic Church that most came to embody the ideals of Delphi was Gnosticism. It was the middle of the second century that saw the proliferation of what are now called Gnostic schemes of cosmology and soteriology, presenting the Church of the day with the most complex, subtle and serious intellectual threat to its gospel. The notion that Gnosticism (supposedly the progeny of the heresiarch of the book of Acts, Simon Magus) was ever an homogenous system was never assumed by their adversaries, and has been thoroughly debunked today.<sup>2</sup> Under the extremely loosely associated leadership of men such as the Ozymandian self-styled Gnostic Valentinus (Irenaeus' most potent and creative adversary, who, Irenaeus felt, had recapitulated all heresy as Christ had recapitulated all history<sup>3</sup>), Marcion, Basilides, Saturninus, Carpocrates, Bardesanes, Marcus, Tatian, Cerdo and Cerinthus were such disparate sects as the Simonians, Ebionites, Nicolaitans, Encratites, Ophites or Naasenes, Sethians, Cainites and Archontics. 'Homogenous' would, in fact, be the last word to use in description of a compilation of such opiate complexity and obscurity, the fruit of a (particularly Alexandrian) composting of Oriental and Hellenic philosophies. However the term is still a useful crudity and so we may present a bowdlerised synthesis of Gnostic cosmogony somewhat as follows. The prime realm consisted of the Πλήρωμα (Fullness), a collection of divine or quasi-divine beings (αἰώνιοι), the root of which was the Προαρχή or Βυθός (Abyss). The other realm was the hylic, with only indirect connections to the former. This realm was the afterbirth of a celestial disruption amongst the αἰώνιοι. That is, one of the αἰώνιοι (Σοφία) had, for her hubristic lust to comprehend the Incomprehensible (having been tempted by Νοῦς),

<sup>1</sup> The question is inspired by the alternative LXX (A) reading of Psa. 8:4, which has τίς (who?) instead of τί (what?). We hope to establish that, whether or not it was the question the psalmist was asking, it was certainly the question of preliminary significance for Irenaeus (and Karl Barth).

<sup>2</sup> Williams, M. A., *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': an argument for dismantling a dubious category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

<sup>3</sup> *Adversus Haereses* (henceforth cited as *AH*) 4.pref.2. Valentinus was a particular threat, not only from the apparent winsomeness of his argument, but due to his position within the Church as a whole, once having been expected to have become Bishop of Rome (Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 4). Though he was proud of the title 'Gnostic', it should be remembered that the term did not have the connotations that came to be associated with it.

been expelled from the Πλήρωμα (or at least her enthymesis [*Achamoth*] had been, whilst Σοφία herself had been restored to the Πλήρωμα). Then, much as in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, the creation itself is formed from the component parts of the monster, thus rendering it a monstrosity in itself. Her compound being resulted in the compound being of the world: her passion serving as the ontological basis of all matter, her longing for truth the basis of soul, and her spiritual nature the basis of the spiritual nature of the γνωστικοί.

The effect was to be thoroughly divisive. For, whilst all good and evil derived from the one Πλήρωμα, this cosmogony reversed the logic of Genesis by making creation consequent upon fall (not, as is commonly suggested, subsuming the one into the other). This meant, despite the original emanation of evil from the Πλήρωμα, that the created sphere was wholly incompatible with the divine by its very nature of being created. Instead of the earth being the Lord's, and everything in it, this cosmogony saw creation as a mere excrescence, a tragi-comic shadow of the Πλήρωμα. Yet the Gnostic problem was not simply the radical segregation of the divine and created spheres as a whole, but, by virtue of the division of *Sophia/Achamoth*, a separation of God and man between and even within individuals. Redemption on such a model could never even amount to being individualistic, let alone cosmic, for neither the whole cosmos nor the whole individual could be redeemed. It could only be the re-separation of the elements of matter, soul and spirit that had been unnaturally compounded, a redemption that would require deep introspection and the knowledge to distinguish the deep self from the psyche. For the Gnostic then, γνώσις, to a very great extent, was ἐπίγνωσις (self-knowledge).

To judge by the mushrooming new literature, the increased use of the terms 'gnosis' and 'Gnosticism' in popular publications, and the increased confidence to be found amongst those who now publicly style themselves 'Gnostics', it would seem that we are today witnessing a renaissance of Gnosticism.<sup>4</sup> Where earlier crypto-Gnostics were compelled to camouflage their heretical beliefs or face the fate of the Cathars, contemporary Gnostics have no longer felt the need for such disguise. Giovanni Filoramo brings to note that the popular reception of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts upon their discovery in 1945 was in part because 'certain areas of the cultural panorama showed a disposition, a peculiar sensitivity to the... texts,... which dealt with

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, many of the works of authors as diverse as Harold Bloom and Philip Pullman. In particular, Bloom, H., *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (New York: Riverhead, 1996).



a phenomenon that they themselves had in some way helped to keep alive.’<sup>5</sup> It would be naïve to imagine that we have a complete reincarnation of Gnosticism rife in society today. It is certainly a strange strain of Gnosticism that can be Gnostic and (to a large extent) not know it. Yet it would be equally naïve to imagine Gnosticism to be a well-entombed fad. If Irenaeus was anywhere near the mark in describing Gnostic thought as the quintessential heresy, it would be unsurprising to find Gnostic influence throughout Church history.<sup>6</sup> Yet, perhaps with the similarity of the distant god of the Enlightenment to the αἰώνιοι of Gnosticism, the phenomenon seemed to come alive again and flourish with peculiar strength in the shadows of modernity.<sup>7</sup> The attraction of post-modernity in its plurality to the Babel of different sects and beliefs in Gnosticism is a mere extension of this. Romanticism often bore close similarity to Gnostic thought, a similarity that was often only thinly veiled for the sake of conformity. For example, the notion of intrinsically evil matter can be seen behind William Blake’s question in ‘The Tyger’: ‘What immortal hand or eye, Could frame thy fearful symmetry?’. Yet even the decidedly unromantic Edward Gibbon could be appreciative of Gnosticism as he cleared it of the centuries-old defamation of being referred to as Manichaeism. In the last century, though, apart from the scholarly work of Hans Jonas, it is Carl Jung who, through his ‘depth’ (Βυθός) psychology, has perhaps done more than all in re-appropriating the Gnostic teachings for a contemporary audience. Richard Smith may be stating the case too strongly when he argues that ‘Jung takes the entire dualist myth and locates it within the psyche’, yet Jung’s psychology is certainly an interpolation, if not a true appropriation of Gnostic thought.<sup>8</sup> Related to such psychological introspection is the contemporary dominance of an ‘ethics of authenticity’ dependant upon a Delphic methodology, well expressed by that far from contemporary ‘tedious old fool,’ Polonius, as he addressed Laertes:

<sup>5</sup> Filoramo, G., *A History of Gnosticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990) p. xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lee, P. J., *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford: OUP, 1986)

<sup>7</sup> As Karl Barth put it when writing on ‘Man in the Eighteenth Century’: ‘must we not continue to ask whether the whole concept of ‘Enlightenment’, the whole picture of the sun piercing the clouds, is enough to characterise one aspect of the century – even on the widest possible interpretation. Could we not with almost as much justice call it the century of mystery?’ Barth, K., *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* trans. B. Cozens (London: SCM, 1959), 13

<sup>8</sup> Smith, R., ‘The Modern Relevance of Gnosticism,’ in J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, third edition (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 540-41. Cf. Edinger, E. F., *The New God-Image: A Study of Jung’s Key Letters Concerning the Evolution of the Western God-Image* (Wilmette, ILL.: Chiron, 1996).

This above all: to thine ownself be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the Gnostic view of evil as inherent within creation is undoubtedly deeply appealing to a terrorised post-holocaust world.<sup>10</sup> And yet it is the very same Gnostic dissolution of man into composite parts that allowed the Nazi recycling of human body components, and that under-girds the modern 'love-hate' crisis in identity as people, longing to 'find themselves', feel themselves to be either alienated from or trapped inside their own bodies (leaving the ironic condition in which, as with the inspired poet in Plato's *Phaedrus*, ecstasy is fulfilment). For, within the Gnostic scheme, the human dilemma is primarily intra-personal: we are pearls in the mud, in exile from our true home in the Πλήρωμα, divine spirits (good) trapped inside hylic bodies (bad) and a hylic realm (bad). The segregation is by no means solely intra-personal, however: we would be foolish to imagine that in contemporary society there is no Gnostic distinction between divine men and women and the herd of mere mortals. There may be no more Sun-Kings, yet what else is the opera 'diva' or the 'star'? Spirit, matter and persons have become so fractured that self-realisation and fulfilment under an 'ethics of authenticity' is the only available soteriology in a covert meta-narrative where humanism has come to be conterminous with atheism.

It is here that the command and blessing 'Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you' comes to bear on the Church as a whole. For in the Church father Irenaeus we have an outstanding theologian who has specifically sought to tackle the Gnostic problem. Only fairly recently has Irenaeus been freed from the condescension of his descendants in the Church, who for too long rather credulously accepted as raw fact the bishop's modest appraisal of himself:

Thou wilt not expect from me, who am resident among the Keltae, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect, any display of rhetoric,

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<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act One, Scene iii; cf. Trilling, L., *Sincerity and Authenticity: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1969-1970* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> Bloom (himself a Jew) writes: 'the normative Judaic, Christian and Muslim teachings that God is both all-powerful and benign... gives one a God who tolerated the Holocaust, and such a God is simply intolerable, since he must be either crazy or irresponsible if his benign omnipotence was compatible with the death camps.' Bloom, 23

which I have never learned, or any excellence of composition, which I have never practised, or any beauty and persuasiveness of style, to which I make no pretensions.<sup>11</sup>

After the autopsy Friedrich Loofs performed on Irenaeus, having dismissed him as a confused and unoriginal editor of meagre theological talent or importance, Irenaeus has been thoroughly resurrected, initially by the works of Montgomery Hitchcock and Gustaf Wingren in particular. Brunner's peroration on Irenaeus in the middle of his work on Christology shows how fast the tide began to turn against Loofs and Harnack:

In spite of the fact that in the formal sense Irenaeus was not a systematic theologian, yet – like Luther – he was a systematic theologian of the first rank, indeed, the greatest systematic theologian: to perceive connections between truths, and to know which belongs to which. No other thinker was able to weld ideas together which others allowed to slip as he was able to do, not even Augustine or Athanasius. But he did not take any trouble to articulate into a theological system the sets of ideas which were connected with their own groups.<sup>12</sup>

Together, Irenaeus' extant works – his 'Επίδειξις τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος and, in particular, the "Ελεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως<sup>13</sup> may be the closest thing to a comprehensive system of theology produced by the early post-apostolic Church. However, *pace* Hick and many others, Brunner was right to qualify that Irenaeus was not a systematic theologian 'in the formal sense', in the sense of

<sup>11</sup> AH 1.pref.3. Raven recapitulated the assessment of his age when he described Irenaeus as so 'inferior in intellectual power and speculative ability to the great Gnostics whom he attacked' that 'much of his work is blundering and confused, and much, if judged by later standards, is defective to the point of heterodoxy' (Raven, C. E., *Apollinarianism: An Essay on the Christology of the Early Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1923), 7).

<sup>12</sup> Brunner, E., *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* trans. Wyon, O. (London: Lutterworth, 1934), 262

<sup>13</sup> 'Επίδειξις τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος will hereafter be referred to as *The Demonstration* (Dem.), the "Ελεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως (also known as Πρὸς τὰς αἱρέσεις) as *Adversus Haereses* (cf. AH 2.pref.1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 20, 26). Citations are from the Roberts and Donaldson translation (*Ante-Nicene Fathers I* (1887; repr. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1987)) unless otherwise noted. Having been unable to access Rousseau's critical *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of the texts, for the Latin and Greek I have referred to Harvey (*Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis: Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses* (Cantabrigiae: Typis Academicis, 1857)) and Migne (Massuet, E., (ed.), *Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis et Martyris Detectionis et Eversionis Falso Cognominatae Agnitionis Libri Quinque* (Paris: 1710); repr. *Patrologia Graeca* 7 (Paris: 1857)).



writing a comprehensive treatise or dogmatic system.<sup>14</sup> Whilst he most certainly manages to ‘weld ideas together’, a tight system was at the time dearer to the concerns of the Gnostics.<sup>15</sup> It is not that he was simply a theologian operating before some vogue for the neat cataloguing of dogmas. Irenaeus had a more immediate pastoral goal. The bishop recognised that under his Episcopal care (and that of others) there was a large group that sought to exempt themselves from his authority and know God immediately. Whilst he did grudgingly recognise their spiritual purpose, the only outcome of their seriously corrupted and deviant doctrine would be the division and damaging of the one Church. It was this that impelled him to write against τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, ‘lest through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves’.<sup>16</sup> And this was not only for the benefit of the apostolic Church, for, whilst he could pour scorn on ‘these portentous and profound mysteries, which do not fall within the range of every intellect, because all have not sufficiently purged their brains’,<sup>17</sup> he could also write in order that the array of heretics he faced ‘may be converted to the truth and saved.’<sup>18</sup> The product is an animated cartoon, giving the outlines for a Christian *Weltanschauung*, in which Wingren is surely right in suggesting that the central problem is ‘*man and the becoming-man, or man and the Incarnation*. This is not the only problem with which he is concerned, but it is his main one.’<sup>19</sup> This can surely be the only conclusion about a theologian who can so strongly affirm that creation exists for the sake of man, and not vice-versa.<sup>20</sup> For, whilst he does not attempt to provide a universal field theory of anthropology, it is clear that he considers this question of human identity to lie at the very heart of the gospel, which is the project of man. For Irenaeus, the goal of the Edenic project is expressed in his

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hick, J., *Evil and the God of Love*, Revised Edition (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1977), 211; also Williams, R., *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), 24

<sup>15</sup> Whilst seeking to use the Gnostics as an early example of the corruption and secularisation of the simple message of Jesus, Harnack is surely right in noting that the Gnostics ‘were the first to transform Christianity into a system of doctrines (dogmas).’ (Harnack, A., *The History of Dogma* trans. N. Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1897), Vol. 1, 228); cf. Gunton, C. E., ‘A Rose by any other Name? From “Christian Doctrine” to “Systematic Theology”’, in *Intellect and Action: Elucidations on Christian Theology and the Life of Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 19-45

<sup>16</sup> AH 1.pref.2; 1 Tim 6:20; cf. AH 4. pref. 1

<sup>17</sup> AH 1.pref.2

<sup>18</sup> AH 4.41.4; cf. 4.pref.1-2

<sup>19</sup> Wingren, G., *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), ix (italics original).

<sup>20</sup> AH 5.29.1; cf. Justin Martyr’s *Second Apology* §4.

deservedly famous because wonderfully balanced maxim: 'the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Gloria enim Dei vivens homo: vita autem hominis visio Dei.* 4.20.7. This is further balanced when he adds 'the glory of man is God, but [His] works [are the glory] of God; and the receptacle of all His wisdom and power is man' (3.20.2).

### The Proper Object of Anthropology

It seems to be a perennial temptation for man to leap to asking ‘what?’ of ‘this quintessence of dust’. Yet to make the ‘what?’ the preliminary question in anthropology is necessarily to assume the Delphic conception of the possibility of an immanent understanding of man. Against the Gnostic mythologising that championed this conception, Irenaeus resolutely placed his anthropology within a dynamic narrative that forces methodological considerations first. That is, before we may ask ‘*what?*’, we are compelled to ask *where* we might find our answer. Where is the proper object of anthropology?

The epic presented in *Adversus Haereses* remains even today an exotic theological rarity for two interdependent reasons in particular: its refusal to ground soteriology on factors external to anthropology such as the fall of angels or the inherent potential of creation; and its teleological narrative. It is this dynamism of Irenaeus’ understanding of the project of man that Wilhelm Bousset so disastrously misunderstood in asserting that, for Irenaeus, ‘Redemption is nothing but the reestablishment of the original nature of man.’<sup>22</sup> Certainly he could write that Christ became incarnate ‘so that what we had lost in Adam – namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God – that we might recover in Christ Jesus.’<sup>23</sup> Yet to understand this as meaning that the bishop’s soteriology involved a mere restoration to Eden would be to do great violence to the texts.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps some of the blame for this should fall upon the inadequacy of *recapitulatio* as a translation of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, in that it gives the impression of a purely cyclical dynamic as opposed to the dynamic of growth and perfecting Irenaeus envisages. Certainly this is the sense in which Paul used the root in Romans 13:9 and Ephesians 1:10.<sup>25</sup> Whether or not an intentional nuance or pun, the ἀνα in ἀνακεφαλαίωσις carries, for Irenaeus, the sense of a virtuous spiral, involving both repetition and movement upwards (revealing again his affinity with the Johannine tradition<sup>26</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> Bousset, W., *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* trans. Steely, J. E. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 438

<sup>23</sup> AH 3.18.1; cf. 5.32.1

<sup>24</sup> AH 5.33.4; 5.34.2

<sup>25</sup> Cf. AH 4.6.2 for Justin Martyr’s use of the root in his lost work against Marcion.

<sup>26</sup> Note the use of ἀνωθεν in Jn. 3:3, 7, 31; 19:11, 23.

By this arrangement, therefore, and these harmonies, and a sequence of this nature, man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God – the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing, and man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, that is, God.

Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created;  
and having been created, should receive growth;  
and having received growth, should be strengthened;  
and having been strengthened, should abound;  
and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin];  
and having recovered, should be glorified;  
and being glorified, should see his Lord.<sup>27</sup>

That said, Irenaeus is too elegant a theologian to be a proto-Darwinian or proto-Marxist. He does not envisage the growth or completion of man through the survival of the fittest, the dialectic of history, or God-consciousness.<sup>28</sup> Such models again remove soteriology from the anthropological mooring Irenaeus would give it and harbour it in genetics, economics, the psychological, or anywhere but the project of man.

Within this project, Adam could never but be one in need of growth. Whilst the Greeks and Romans imagined Athena or Minerva emerging fully armed and mature from the brain of her divine father, Irenaeus held Adam not to be a divine emanation or generation, but a creation, and so by very nature immature. Even before the fall, whilst he most certainly was counted as innocent, that innocence did not amount to righteousness or perfection. Instead of nostalgically conceiving Eden as the Renaissance's lost *aetas aurea*, Irenaeus presents Adam in Eden as the necessarily incomplete foundation of a far grander scheme. This he explains in countering the potential objection that such imperfection is incompatible with the perfection of God:

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<sup>27</sup> AH 4.38.3

<sup>28</sup> That being the case, Irenaeus does not foreshadow the grain of Gore's *Lux Mundi*, in particular the fifth essay 'The Incarnation and Development' in which J. R. Illingworth saw 'the law of evolution' as the proper starting point for an analysis of incarnation. (Gore, C., *Lux Mundi* (London: John Murray, 1889), 181ff) Nor can John Hick be correct in fitting Schleiermacher's eschatology and nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking within what he calls the 'Irenaeian type' of theology. (*Evil and the God of Love*, 219f.)



If, however, any one say, “What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from beginning?” let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect.<sup>29</sup>

Adam’s imperfection as man – an imperfection not to be equated with, despite its susceptibility to, evil – is thus rooted in the necessary imperfection of contingent and created being. As such, even before the corruption of man in the fall, Adam could never be seen as the proper object of anthropology, but only as the child (νήπιος) that Christ would suffer to call to himself as the recipient of salvation.<sup>30</sup>

That Adam fell and that man is fallen only adds to his ineligibility. Whilst it is good to obey God, and evil not to obey God, Adam chose, in disobedience to God, to obtain his own, immediate knowledge of good and evil. Irenaeus concludes: ‘if any one do shun the knowledge of both these kinds of things, and the twofold perception of knowledge, he unawares divests himself of the character of a human being. How, then, shall he be a God, who has not as yet been made a man?’<sup>31</sup> Almost as if he were reversing the process of maturation and bolstering his infantile status, Adam, in his disobedience, had only further divested himself of the status of manhood.

It is only in that One who came as an infant for Adam’s redemption that Adam could receive growth from his infancy to glorification.

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<sup>29</sup> AH 4.38.1

<sup>30</sup> AH 3.22.4; 4.38.1; *Dem.* 12, 14, *passim*. Whether derived from Irenaeus himself or not, the idea that, being recently created, Adam and Eve were essentially infantile and immature, had a wider appeal within the early centuries of the post-apostolic Church. So Clement of Alexandria: ‘Above all, this ought to be known, that by nature we are adapted for virtue; not so as to be possessed of it from our birth, but so as to be adapted for acquiring it. By which consideration is solved the question propounded to us by the heretics, Whether Adam was created perfect or imperfect? Well, if imperfect, how could the work of a perfect God – above all, that work being man – be imperfect? And if perfect, how did he transgress the commandments? For they shall hear from us that he was not perfect in his creation, but adapted to the reception of virtue.’ (*Stromata*, 6.11-12) So too Theophilus of Antioch: ‘The tree of knowledge itself was good, and its fruit was good. For it was not the tree, as some think, but the disobedience, which had death in it. For there was nothing else in the fruit than only knowledge; but knowledge is good when one uses it discreetly. But Adam, being yet an infant in age, was on this account as yet unable to receive knowledge worthily. For now, also, when a child is born it is not at once able to eat bread, but is nourished first with milk, and then, with the increment of years, it advances to solid food.’ (*Ad Autolycus*, 2.25)

<sup>31</sup> AH 4.39.1-2

it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant.... He might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk, [because we were] as infants.<sup>32</sup>

Irenaeus' contention that Christ's incarnate priestly ministry lasted from the age of thirty to fifty<sup>33</sup> – the career length of the Levitical priests – can be too easily dismissed as *sui generis*, incidental, or the strained result of stretching every argument and text over the Procrustean bed of recapitulation. However, apart from the caution we must exercise in attributing idiosyncrasy to so staunch an advocate of the *regula fidei* or *regula veritatis*, the claim is by no means incidental.<sup>34</sup> It is only the one who, as he matured, has brought flesh from infancy to maturity, and so sanctified men of every age, that can be saviour and truly man. Humanity otherwise was as an unmarried woman, a body without a head.<sup>35</sup>

True man, though, was not displayed only by the perfecting and maturing of childish Adam. Such stop-gap salvation would be a far cry from Irenaeus' vision of the one οἰκονομία θεοῦ. For not only was Adam the incomplete child, but also, as the *protoplastus*, already he existed as the shadow of the *primogenitus*.<sup>36</sup> We might even say that as the shadow, darkness is an inherent part of his constitution. Not that he is in any sense created evil (for in that case the Son who created would never have taken flesh upon himself), but that Adam was not true man – man is not created Man. It is for this reason more than any other that Irenaeus could never envisage Adam and his race as the locus of true humanity, the proper object of anthropology. Thus there is a problem for anthropology far more profound than a mere 'missing link'.

To use the protoevangelical words that constitute man ('Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'), Adam was never created the image or likeness of God. Here Pannenberg is close to the mark in stating that

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<sup>32</sup> AH 4.38.1

<sup>33</sup> AH 2.22

<sup>34</sup> Cf. AH 3.2.1f; 3.15.1; 4.35.4; 5.20.2; passim.

<sup>35</sup> AH 3.16.6; 3.19.3; 4.32.1; 4.34.4; 5.14.4; 5.20.2; 1 Cor. 11:1-6; Col. 1:18-9

<sup>36</sup> AH 5.19.1

materially the interpretation of Irenaeus, and of others who followed him, expresses the unfinished nature of the image. Renaissance thinkers gave special emphasis to this point. Thus Pico della Mirandola said that Adam was created as a being of imprecise form (*indiscretae opus imaginis*).<sup>37</sup>

However, Irenaeus was no Whig beforetime, dreaming of an immanent human progress in which Christ was relegated to the role of the kindly colonial catalyst. Such a dream could not have survived the horrors of the waves of persecution that had (in 177 in particular) and would hit Lugdunum. Instead, Irenaeus provided a Christologically determined anthropology that involves no distinction between the *imago Dei* as the original designation of man, and the *imago Christi* as a later messianic calling.<sup>38</sup> Adam never was the Image of God and neither can his race be of themselves. But 'the image of God is the Son, according to whose image was man made'.<sup>39</sup> Thus it was only with the visible appearance of the true Image in the incarnation that Adam, created to be like Christ, could be perfected after the Image and Likeness.

For in times long past, it was *said* that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [actually] *shown*; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created, Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.<sup>40</sup>

To seek for man in any other place than the visible Word, as the Gnostics did through introspection or myth, would be to distort the image of the king into that of a fox.<sup>41</sup> It would be a recapitulation of Adam's sin in the garden in being an attempt to acquire knowledge immediately, without the Logos.

<sup>37</sup> Pannenberg, W., *Systematic Theology* trans. Bromiley, G. W. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans & Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1994,1998), Vol. 2, 217

<sup>38</sup> Moltmann, J., *God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation* trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 1985), 216-228

<sup>39</sup> *Dem.* 22; cf. *Dem.* 11, 55; *AH* 4.33.4; 5.1; 5.16.1-2. Presumably this builds upon the Pauline doctrine of Christ as the 'image of the invisible God' (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

<sup>40</sup> *AH* 5.16.2; cf. 4.33.4

<sup>41</sup> *AH* 1.9.4

It was, according to Irenaeus, the nature of Gnosticism to separate what should be united and thus be atomistic, a trap we need be wary of falling into in considering anthropology. It is therefore the contention of this study that Christological anthropology is more than simply a part of the trend for the dismantling of boundaries between academic disciplines. It is not only the case that Christology and anthropology genuinely relate, particularly in Irenaeus, but that for Irenaeus, anthropology can only be done in the light of Christology, not introspection. The pivotal question that then remains is: if the Word reveals man in the incarnation, in what sense did Irenaeus understand Jesus Christ to be man?



## Homo Humanus

One problem Irenaeus faced when composing *Adversus Haereses* was the lack of a single opposition. If Gnosticism could be described as single, it was only so in the sense of the Hydra of Lerna, with its numerous serpentine heads.<sup>42</sup> Yet it was precisely this lack of cohesion amongst the various hypotheses of the numerous Gnostic sects that provided the argument for the central section of the first book of the work in enabling him to contrast this with the ‘unity of the faith of the Church throughout the whole world’.<sup>43</sup> Against such multifaceted mythology he explains the content of this faith as a single, integrated project or οἰκονομία of salvation.

However, the prime target of the Gnostic separating of what should be united was the person of Jesus Christ. First, since he was working in the material realm, Gnosticism was always forced to reduce Jesus of Nazareth to the status of a mere avatar, prophet, or man possessed in some sense by divinity. All his work on earth was interpreted, by the Valentinian school in particular, as the symbolic acting out of spiritual realities that had already taken place within the Πλήρωμα. Rather than being an effective saviour, the Valentinian Jesus thus looked more like Homer’s wandering Odysseus, his fate always being determined by, and hanging in the balance of, the divine squabbles on Olympus. This was because, secondly, Gnostic Christology could not conceive of incarnation, which would impossibly compound God and man. The very closest it might come to a doctrine of incarnation would be the idea that ‘Christ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube’.<sup>44</sup> Christ would remain as untouched as the spirits of the γνωστικοί, ‘even as gold, when submersed in filth, loses not on that account its beauty.’<sup>45</sup> More commonly, if the sect did not consider Jesus and Christ to be different beings in the Πλήρωμα, the man Jesus would be seen as the mere temporary receptacle of the αἰών Christ.<sup>46</sup> Speaking of trends broader than, but consonant with, Gnosticism, Grillmeier reminds us that the Greek mind

could certainly think of no greater opposition than that of ‘Logos’ to ‘sarx,’ especially if the idea of suffering and death was associated with it. For this

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<sup>42</sup> AH 1.30.15

<sup>43</sup> AH 1.14; 1.10

<sup>44</sup> AH 1.7.2; 3.11.3; cf. 4.2.4

<sup>45</sup> AH 1.6.2

<sup>46</sup> Cf. AH 3.16.1; 3.17

reason, the Christian proclamation saw ever-repeated attempts of a Docetic kind to deny the reality of Christ's flesh or to loosen the unity of Logos and sarx.<sup>47</sup>

The most extreme expressions of this dichotomy describe how, either Christ left Jesus immediately before the crucifixion, or, with Basilides, that

he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead; so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus, was crucified, through ignorance and error, while Jesus himself received the form of Simon, and, standing by, laughed at them. For since he was an incorporeal power, and the Nous (mind) of the unborn father, he transfigured himself as he pleased, and thus ascended to him who had sent him, deriding them, inasmuch as he could not be laid hold of, and was invisible to all.<sup>48</sup>

If, at best, Jesus Christ was depicted as passing through Mary as water through a tube, at worst the reality of Gnostic Christology was that Christ was made to pass through *Jesus* as water through a tube. Thus if other men were divided up by Gnosticism, Jesus Christ was more so – separated out from men if seen as more angelic or divine than human; from God as being incompatible with the Hellenic ideal of divinity, and fragmented within himself.

It was in opposition to all Gnostic variants of a split or awkwardly spliced Jesus Christ that Irenaeus founded his doctrine of the one economy. For the idea that Christ was one and Jesus another, or suggesting that Christ was not truly born in the flesh, he believed to be homicidal, leaving its adherents 'outside of the [Christian] dispensation', 'under the old condemnation', 'in a state of death having been not as yet joined to the Word of God the Father'.<sup>49</sup> For 'how can these men really be partakers of salvation, if He in whom they profess to believe, manifested Himself as a merely imaginary being?'<sup>50</sup> Irenaeus adopted 1 Corinthians 8:6 as the leitmotiv of his response: 'there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is

<sup>47</sup> Grillmeier, A., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol.1 (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 34

<sup>48</sup> *AH* 1.24.4; cf. 1.7.2; 1.30.13; 4.2.4; the Gnostic *Acts of John* 97-104

<sup>49</sup> *AH* 3.17.3; 3.16.8; 3.18.7; 3.19.1; cf. 4.pref.3

<sup>50</sup> *AH* 4.33.5

but *one Lord Jesus Christ*, through whom all things came and through whom we live.’<sup>51</sup>

In studying Irenaeus there is naturally some struggle to hear the authentic voice of the bishop down through the centuries of secondary literature and debate on the issues he addressed. Eric Osborn’s recent study attempted to summarise his thought in four concepts: divine Intellect, economy, recapitulation and participation.<sup>52</sup> These may be correct, but they seem too abstract and static to be genuinely helpful as descriptions of Irenaeus’ thought. Furthermore, they do not seem sufficiently to account for the importance of the project of man in his thought, with incarnation as the dynamic fulcrum of this majestic vision. After all, it is with this that he concludes *Adversus Haereses*:

For there is the one Son, who accomplished His Father’s will; and one human race also in which the mysteries of God are wrought, “which the angels desire to look into;” and they are not able to search out the Wisdom of God, by means of Which His handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection; that His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature (*facturam*), that is, to what had been moulded (*plasma*), and that it should be contained by Him; and, on the other hand, the creature should contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps closer to the pulse of the work is Denis Minns, who, following Paul Beuzart, takes the first clause of 1 Corinthians 8:6 to see ‘one God’ as the dominant theme of the work.<sup>54</sup> Irenaeus’ opposition to ‘conjuring up a number of gods, and simulating many Fathers’, as he sees happening in the plethora of divine beings in the Gnostic Πλήρωμα, is certainly a dominant and necessary theme to underpin the one economy.<sup>55</sup> Rather than there being a πλήρωμα αἰωνίων, Irenaeus sees the one God as ‘all thought, all will, all mind, all light, all eye, all ear, the one entire fountain of all good things.’<sup>56</sup> However, whilst the singularity and unity of the economy does indeed flow from there

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<sup>51</sup> See especially *AH* 1.10.1.

<sup>52</sup> Osborn, E., *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001)

<sup>53</sup> *AH* 5.36.3

<sup>54</sup> Minns, D., *Irenaeus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994); Beuzart, P., *Essai sur la Théologie d’Irénee* (Le Puy: 1908).

<sup>55</sup> *AH* 3.16.8

<sup>56</sup> *AH* 1.12.2



being one God, it is a singularity and unity maintained only by the fact that it is the same Word that is the agent of the one project of creation and redemption. His imposing landscape of the cosmic history of creation, through redemption, to final consummation as one single (though not simple) project depended on one single (though not simple) Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Irenaeus is quick to use bold Christological language reminiscent of the striking *Carmen Christi* from Philippians and the exordium of the book of Hebrews. That is, it is the exact same one who both sustains all things and who provided purification for sins. More than anything else, it is upon this – one Lord Jesus Christ – that his presentation of the single economy against the divisiveness of his protean opponents depends.<sup>57</sup> As Harnack put it, it is this that stands as ‘the cardinal doctrine of Irenaeus’.<sup>58</sup>

To speak broadly, it is all too common amongst christologies that have stepped away from a complete segregation of the *vere homo* and *vere Deus* to find a deep reticence to face up to the Christological paradoxes, preferring instead to ignore or avoid them.<sup>59</sup> The tendency here is to slip into the sentiment that incarnation is a ‘mystery’ to be respected only at a distance and not approached (the word ‘mystery’ being most ironically used here, given that Christ, as the revelation of God that we may know, is himself τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (Col. 2:2)). However, though this mystery is holy ground, Irenaeus describes such sentiment as characteristically Gnostic reasoning, and urges instead that ‘it is much more suitable that we, directing our inquiries after this fashion, should exercise ourselves in the investigation of the mystery and administration of the living God.’<sup>60</sup> It is only speculation about the immanent relationship between the Father and the Son on which he calls for reserve, seeing Isaiah’s question ‘Who shall describe His generation?’ as the trump to all conjecture here.<sup>61</sup>

Given, then, his preparedness to exegete one Lord Jesus Christ, how did he understand this *vere Deus* to be *vere Homo*? Kurt Rudolph makes a claim that is baffling, given Irenaeus’ adherence to the Johannine tradition: providing explanation

<sup>57</sup> See Book III in particular: for example, AH 3.11.1; 3:16ff, *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Harnack, Vol. 2, 276

<sup>59</sup> Even more strongly, William Temple felt that ‘if any man says that he understands the relation of Deity to humanity in Christ, he only makes it clear that he does not understand at all what is meant by an Incarnation’ (Temple, W., *Christus Veritas* (London: Macmillan, 1925), 139). In regard to this, it hardly needs to be said that the so-called ‘Johannine thunderbolt’ of Matthew 11:27, that οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ is a personal, as opposed to a metaphysical, declaration.

<sup>60</sup> AH 2.28.1; cf. 1.19.2; 1.21.4; 1.25.5; 3.15.2

<sup>61</sup> In seeking to protect the eternal deity of the Son within a single Godhead, Irenaeus was uncomfortable with the phrase λόγος προφορικός, or with the description of the Son and the Spirit – the ‘Hands’ of the Father – as προβολαί (AH 2.28.5-6; cf. 2.30.9; 3.18.2; 3.19.2; 4.33.11; Justin, *I Ap.* 51; *Dial.* 43, 68, 76).

for the Gnostic preference for the Gospel of John, he suggests that in the Johannine view of Christ,

it is not his earthly appearance which is decisive, but his heavenly and otherworldly origin which only faith can perceive. That he has come 'in the flesh' means only this, that he has entered into the earthly and human sphere, just as Gnosis also assumes with regard to the redeemer. But the 'fleshly Christ' is not the true one, it is the non-fleshly, the Christ of glory, the Logos.<sup>62</sup>

However, Irenaeus understood the agenda of the fourth gospel to be ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ (Jn 20:31); an agenda that, far from showing affinity to the Gnostic preference for the supernal, foresaw 'these blasphemous systems which divide the Lord, as far as lies in their power, saying that He was formed of two different substances (οὐσίαι)'.<sup>63</sup>

For, despite Erasmus' judgment that Irenaeus was a philosopher, he does not follow what is often perceived to be Justin's generally more positive approach to human philosophy ('on account of the *Logos spermatikos* implanted in every race of men'), referring instead to philosophers as 'those who were ignorant of God'.<sup>64</sup> Thus he freed himself to be more critical of the Platonic antithesis between spirit and matter, God and man. No longer is the Logos the demiurgic cushion between God and the world, but the very presence of God in the world. Where the Father is wholly transcendent – 'above all' – the Son 'is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things'.<sup>65</sup> So unflinchingly can he expound this that Osborn observes that it 'is astonishing how much of what Irenaeus says about the creator, who excels nature, has Stoic overtones, despite the fact that the Stoic creator... is so immanent as to be identical with the world'.<sup>66</sup> Certainly it was an Epicurean doctrine of the distance between God and the world that lay at the heart of what he sought to oppose in Gnosticism. There is, in fact, a remarkable degree of similarity

<sup>62</sup> Rudolph, K., *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* trans. Wilson, R. M. (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 159

<sup>63</sup> AH 3.16.5

<sup>64</sup> *II Apology* 8 (cf. *I Ap.* 5, 46); AH 2.14.2. Justin, however, was far from issuing a blanket approval of all philosophy, which he is happy to equate with demon worship (cf. his entire *Discourse to the Greeks* and much of the *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*), approving Socrates for his very rejection of the poets such as Homer (*II Ap.* 10).

<sup>65</sup> AH 5.18.2-3

<sup>66</sup> Osborn, 35

between the efforts of Epicurus to remove the uncomfortable intrusion of the divine into the human sphere and Gnostic cosmogony, the practical effect of both being either dissipation or asceticism. In complete opposition to the Gnostic doctrine that the primary Ogdoad consists of a right hand and a left hand Tetrad – one being light and the other darkness, so confirming the segregation of hylic and animal – Irenaeus proffered an alternative reading of the ‘hands’ of God that saw the Son and the Spirit as the ones that kept what was distinct from God (creation) from being opposed to or distanced from God.<sup>67</sup>

With this as his background, he categorically refused to allow a judgment of Solomon to be executed upon the person of Jesus Christ. Here was no Jacob of divinity fighting an Esau of humanity within the womb of the one person. Furthermore, this entailed a refusal to predicate particular actions as being ‘proper’ to either his divinity or his humanity. In this sense, Irenaeus had condemned Nestorius (for whom such predication was axiomatic) beforetime, but also showed himself to be opposed to the traditions of Antioch and the reasoning embodied in Leo’s *Tome*, that the

nativity of the flesh was the manifestation of human nature; the childbearing of a virgin is the proof of Divine power. The infancy of a babe is shown in the humbleness of its cradle; the greatness of the Most High is proclaimed by the angels’ voices.<sup>68</sup>

Instead, refusing to segregate ‘the humbleness of the cradle’ from the ‘Divine power’, Irenaeus saw Isaiah’s Emmanuel prophecy as

signifying that both the promise made to the fathers had been accomplished, that the Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Saviour whom the prophets had foretold; not, as these men assert, that Jesus was He who was born of Mary, but that Christ was He who descended from above. Matthew might certainly have said, “Now the birth of *Jesus* was on this wise”; but the Holy Ghost, foreseeing the corrupters [of the truth], and guarding by anticipation against their deceit, says by Matthew, “But the birth

<sup>67</sup> *AH* 1.6.1; 1.11.2; 4.20.1, 3; 4.pref.4; 5.1.3; 5.5.1; 5.6.1; 5.28.4. Cf. Job 10:8; Psa. 119:73; Ascension of Isaiah 9.27-42; 11.32-5; 2 Enoch 20ff.

<sup>68</sup> Leo the Great, *Letter XXVIII. To Flavian Commonly Called “The Tome”*, IV in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series Vol. XII*. eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (repr. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1975). Cf. Harnack, 2, 276.



of *Christ* was on this wise”; and that He is Emmanuel, lest perchance we might consider Him as a mere man: for “not by the will of the flesh nor by the will of man, but by the will of God was the Word made flesh”; and that we should not imagine that Jesus was one, and Christ another, but should know them to be one and the same.<sup>69</sup>

The bishop saw that any dismantling of Christ would have immediate and catastrophic pastoral consequences. In this he held that he was simply working out Johannine logic: ‘Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son.’<sup>70</sup> Of those who were guilty of this (in this case the Ebionites), he asked ‘how can they be saved unless it was God who wrought out their salvation upon earth? Or how shall man pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into man?’<sup>71</sup> For it is within this one Lord Jesus Christ that his entire schema of salvation is to be construed. Were he carved up, there could be no salvation, for then it could not be the case that ‘our Lord Jesus Christ, did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.’<sup>72</sup> This was an issue of equal importance to those who had recently come through the persecution of 177 and were under constant threat of more. Thus in the middle of an argument for the reality and necessity of the incarnation (3.16.1-3.18.7), he inserts a section on discipleship and martyrdom: ‘If, however, He [Christ] was Himself not to suffer, but should fly away from Jesus, why did He exhort His disciples to take up the cross and follow Him?’<sup>73</sup> Instead, ‘when He underwent tyranny, He prayed His Father that He would forgive those who had crucified Him. For He did Himself truly bring in salvation: since He is Himself the Word of God, Himself the Only-begotten of the Father, Christ Jesus our Lord.’<sup>74</sup> A mere fleshly receptacle of the αἰών suffering on the cross in abstraction from the eternal Son would be little encouragement to those going through their own suffering for him.

Irenaeus, then, sees in the gospels no religious Frankenstein’s monster, an ill-assembled patchwork of divinity and humanity. Rather, he is prepared to speak of the union of the Logos with sarx in bold terms (ἐνοῦν, συνενοῦν, κολλᾶν, ἔνωσις). There is

<sup>69</sup> AH 3.16.2; cf. 3.19.1; 3.21.1

<sup>70</sup> 1 John 2:22; cf. AH 3.16.5

<sup>71</sup> AH 4.33.4 cf. 5.1.3

<sup>72</sup> AH 5.pref. *Verbum Dei, Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum, qui propter immensam suam dilectionem factus est quod sumus nos, uti nos perficeret esse quod et ipse.*

<sup>73</sup> AH 3.18.5; cf. 3.12.2; 3.16.6

<sup>74</sup> AH 3.16.9

one possible – even if surprising – analogy that may aid us in grappling with his conception of the relationship between spirit and flesh, and that is how he conceives the serpent of Eden’s relationship to Satan. For the serpent is said to have borne Satan as he ‘led man astray through the instrumentality of the serpent, concealing himself as it were from God.’<sup>75</sup> Yet the serpent is also spoken of as the active agent of the fall and so the proper object of the curse: ‘the curse in all its fullness fell upon the serpent, which had beguiled them’.<sup>76</sup> Whilst only an imperfect analogy, the Satan-serpent relationship demonstrates his preparedness to speak of the profound and robust unity that can be effected between spirit and flesh. To return and apply this to Christology, Wingren is surely right to summarise that

if we were to insist on his providing us with a clear definition of Christ’s divinity as distinct from His humanity, we should be forcing him into the position of having to set Christ’s divinity and humanity over against one another in order to give a sufficiently clear answer to our question, in so doing destroying what is central to his theology.<sup>77</sup>

Thus the fleshly hand of Jesus is repeatedly presented as the presence of the divine Hand, the Son.<sup>78</sup> For, in the incarnation, Christ ‘united man with God and wrought a communion of God and man’.<sup>79</sup> Here John Behr draws a striking parallel in noting that ‘this statement was cited in a slightly different fashion in the Monophysite *Seal of Faith*, as “... and wrought one nature of God and man”, making the general theological-anthropological affirmation a Christological assertion.’<sup>80</sup> If, despite the distinct historical circumstances, Irenaeus’ language can in many ways pre-empt that of Monophysitism, it seems quite extraordinary that Loofs could have so misconstrued Irenaeus as to understand him to be speaking of two persons in Christ.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>75</sup> AH 5.26.2; Dem. 16; cf. the dubious Frag. 16.

<sup>76</sup> AH 3.23.3

<sup>77</sup> Wingren, 100-1. This insight seems to hold in post-apostolic and apologetic theology more generally. Thus Justin Martyr can exegete Gen 49:10, writing: ‘what is spoken of as “the blood of the grape,” signifies that He who should appear would have blood, though not of the seed of man, but of the power of God.... For as man did not make the blood of the vine, but God, so it was hereby intimated that the blood should not be of human seed, but of divine power’ (*I Apology*, 32). Cf. Harnack, 2, 279.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. AH 4.6.6; 5.15.3

<sup>79</sup> Dem. 31

<sup>80</sup> Behr, J. (translation and commentary), *Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, N. Y.: SVS, 1997), 107, n83; cf. Cf. Froidevaux, L. M., “Sur trois passages de la *Démonstration* de Saint Irénée,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 39 (1951-2), 372-80; also Harnack IV, 174.

<sup>81</sup> Loofs, F., *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1930)

That said, there is one famous potential departure from what might later be interpreted to be a Christology of high Alexandrian temperament. For at the culmination of an argument for the one divine and human Jesus Christ he writes:

For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, so also was He the Word that He might be glorified; the Word remaining quiescent, that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, but the human nature being swallowed up in it (the divine), when it conquered, and endured [without yielding], and performed acts of kindness, and rose again, and was received up [into heaven].<sup>82</sup>

Harnack comments,

From these words it is plain that Irenaeus preferred to assume that the divine and human natures existed side by side, and consequently to split up the perfect unity, rather than teach an ideal manhood which would be at the same time a divine manhood.<sup>83</sup>

It is interesting to note here the similarity Irenaeus can bear even in this to that proponent of Cyrillian Christology, Luther.

He was forsaken by God. This does not mean that the deity was separated from the humanity—for in this person who is Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, deity and humanity are so united that they can never be separated or divided—but that the deity withdrew and hid so that it seemed, and anyone who saw it might say, “This is not God, but a mere man, and a troubled and desperate man at that.” The humanity was left alone, the devil had free access to Christ, and the deity withdrew its power and let the humanity fight alone.<sup>84</sup>

This was the same Luther that could sound very much like Irenaeus in claiming

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<sup>82</sup> AH 3.19.3

<sup>83</sup> Harnack, 2, 284

<sup>84</sup> Luther, M., *Luther's Works, Vol. 12: Selected Psalms I* trans. and ed. J. J. Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955), Psa. 8:5, 126-7



these two natures are so united that there is only one God and Lord, that Mary suckles God with her breasts, bathes God, rocks Him, and carries Him; furthermore, that Pilate and Herod crucified and killed God. The two natures are so joined that the true deity and humanity are one.<sup>85</sup>

However, we would be unwise here to imagine Irenaeus starting to wax metaphysical and so import the sort of questions that would later divide Antioch and Alexandria. For Irenaeus later explains exactly in what sense he understands this 'quiescence':

the Lord did perform His command, being made of a woman, by both destroying our adversary, and perfecting man after the image and likeness of God. And for this reason He did not draw the means of confounding him from any other source than from the words of the law.<sup>86</sup>

That is, in defeating Satan in the wilderness, it is not that Jesus ever became abstracted from Christ. Rather, Irenaeus understands the recapitulation of Adam to be fulfilled by Christ taking the role of feeble Adam to conquer where Adam had failed. The temptation in the wilderness is the supreme example of Christ having taken the position of man under the law, using only the law to undo the work of Adam: '[t]he corruption of man, therefore, which occurred in paradise by both [of our first parents] eating, was done away with by [the Lord's] want of food in this world.'<sup>87</sup>

A preliminary question to ask might be whether, if Irenaeus is in many ways the paterfamilias of the Alexandrian tradition of Christology (μία φύσις τοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη), his Christ's humanity is effectively made to drown in a sea of divinity. For what Maurice Relton provocatively called the Englishman, 'practical above all things, spurner of day-dreams, doomed by nature to possess an Antiochene mind,' his Christology can be a surd.<sup>88</sup> However, despite that, for anyone remotely acquainted with Irenaeus, this question would not take long to answer. His passionate concern for the spiritual welfare of his Gnostic opponents certainly seems a far cry from the

<sup>85</sup> Luther, M., *Luther's Works, Vol. 22: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-4* trans. and ed. J. J. Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1957), Jn. 3:35, 492-3

<sup>86</sup> AH 5.21.2; cf. 5.21.3-4

<sup>87</sup> AH 5.21.2. *Quae ergo fuit in Paradiso repletio hominis per duplicem gustationem, dissoluta est per eam, quae fuit in hoc mundo, indigentiam.* Harvey notes on *repletio*: 'There can be no doubt but that the translator read ἀναπλήρωσις for ἀναπλήρωσις, *vitiatio*.' Harvey, W. W. (ed.), *Sancti Irenaei: Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses* (Cantabrigiae: Typis Academicis, 1857), Tom. II, 382, n4.

<sup>88</sup> Relton, H. M., *Church Times*, September 30, 1921, later published in *The Catholic Conception of the Incarnation and Other Sermons* (London: SPCK, 1928), 19



intemperate style of Cyril of Alexandria, which Prestige suggests may be the product of a lack of pneumatology and a lack of humanity in his Christ.<sup>89</sup> (Given the corresponding bigotry of Nestorius, the argument could, of course, be turned on its head to suggest that Nestorius' Christ was in fact equally, if not more, inhuman.) Whatever we might make of such a pragmatic argument, the thought that the union of God and man in Christ could mean the overwhelming of man would probably not have occurred to Irenaeus in any sense other than that of a Gnostic dualism that itself needed to be overcome. Rather, man is established, sustained, embraced and 'contained' in union with God in Christ.<sup>90</sup>

Yet, no matter to what level we pursue it, such an examination of the consonance he assumes between divinity and flesh does not seem to do justice to the profundity with which he understands Jesus Christ to be human. This can be seen in his exegeses of the Old Testament. Like a good Berean, Irenaeus allows the Old Testament to be determinative in his argument for its own sake and for the sake of countering the divisiveness of Gnosticism at this point (which saw the God of the Jews as an angelic pretender to supreme deity<sup>91</sup>). Against the Gnostics, Irenaeus saw the Old Testament as the revelation, not of another being than the Father revealed in Christ through the Spirit, but the very same God, known by the faithful:

the law never hindered them from believing in the Son of God; nay, but it even exhorted them so to do, saying that men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent than by believing in Him who, in the likeness of sinful flesh, is lifted up from the earth upon the tree of martyrdom, and draws all things to Himself, and vivifies the dead.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, this was no opaque revelation of a distant, deceitful, or unknown God. On the contrary, as just one example, he conceives of Moses as having been explicitly aware of the passion and name of Jesus.<sup>93</sup> The content of the apostolic proclamation in Acts was new to Jewish audiences in but one respect: that the same Word that the patriarchs had known had now come in the flesh. This he saw as equally true for Jewish proselytes such as the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip encountered in Acts 8. 'For

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<sup>89</sup> Prestige, G. L. *Fathers and Heretics*. The Bampton Lectures, 1940 (London: SPCK, 1940), 171-2

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *AH* 3.16.3

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *AH* 1.24.1-2; 1.27.3

<sup>92</sup> *AH* 4.2.7; cf. 4.2.3

<sup>93</sup> *AH* 4.10.1; *Dem.* 27

nothing else [but baptism] was wanting to him who had been already instructed by the prophets: he was not ignorant of God the Father, nor of the rules as to the [proper] manner of life, but was merely ignorant of the advent of the Son of God.<sup>94</sup> That the faithful of the Old Testament could have had such complete knowledge of the apostolic gospel was possible because of Irenaeus' belief that the one Father always reveals himself through his one Word: 'the Spirit shows forth the Word, and therefore the prophets announced the Son of God; and the Word utters the Spirit, and therefore is Himself the announcer of the prophets, and leads and draws man to the Father.'<sup>95</sup> Therefore it was this Word, Jesus Christ, that had spoken with Adam in the garden, with the patriarchs, the prophets, the faithful in exile in Babylon, and even less salubrious characters such as Balaam.<sup>96</sup> A common designation of the Word for Irenaeus is, simply, 'the one who spoke with Moses'.<sup>97</sup> In what resembles a primitive confessional, he writes:

With regard to Christ, the law and the prophets and the evangelists have proclaimed that He was born of a virgin, that He suffered upon a beam of wood, and that He appeared from the dead; that He also ascended to the heavens, and was glorified by the Father, and is the Eternal King; that He is the perfect Intelligence, the Word of God, who was begotten before the light; that He was the Founder of the universe, along with it (light), and the Maker of man; that He is All in all: Patriarch among the patriarchs; Law in the laws; Chief Priest among priests; Ruler among kings; the Prophet among prophets; the Angel among angels; the Man among men; Son in the Father; God in God; King to all eternity. For it is He who sailed [in the ark] along with Noah, and who guided Abraham; who was bound along with Isaac, and was a Wanderer with Jacob; the Shepherd of those who are saved, and the Bridegroom of the Church; the Chief also of the cherubim, the Prince of the angelic powers; God of God; Son of the Father; Jesus Christ; King for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *AH* 4.23.2

<sup>95</sup> *Dem.* 5

<sup>96</sup> *AH* 3.6.2; 3.18.1; 4.5ff.; 5.5.2; *Frag.* 23; *Dem.* 43ff., passim. In reference to Gen. 3:8, Irenaeus refers to Jesus not just as the Word, but also as the 'Voice of God' (*AH* 5.15.4; 5.16.1; 5.17.1; cf. 4.16.3-4).

<sup>97</sup> *AH* 3.15.3; 4.5.2; 4.9.1; 4.10.1; *Dem.* 40

<sup>98</sup> *Frag.* 53; cf. also *Frag.* 54. These Christophanies were provided out of God's mercy, for without such a sight of the object of their faith, Irenaeus holds that not only would the faithful themselves fall into despair, but mankind as a whole would 'cease to exist' (*AH* 4.20.7).

In all this, we should not imagine that ‘the Man among men’, the subject of these Christophanies, is seen by Irenaeus as non-human. Rather, Christ ‘spoke in human shape to Abraham’.<sup>99</sup> In this, Irenaeus is consonant with the ongoing theme in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* of Christ’s appearing as man to the faithful of the Old Testament, working in particular from such passages as Genesis 32:24-30, Judges 13, and Ezekiel 1:

And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, *and appearing formerly in power as Man*, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment executed on Sodom, has been demonstrated fully by what has been said.<sup>100</sup>

There is, however, some confusion at this point, and understandably so, for here we seem to be presented with humanity, but not as we know it. Our very prefabricated formulation of man’s identity and being prevents Irenaeus’ being understood here. Our definition of man is not necessarily his. This is illustrated by Houssiau’s understanding of such anthropomorphic Christophanies as ‘mere symbolic representations of the future reality: the Word remains just as invisible as the Father, since His manifestation belongs to the New Testament.’<sup>101</sup> Certainly Irenaeus considered the appearances of Jesus Christ as man before the incarnation to be in some sense prophetic. Thus, long before the incarnation, he can understand Jeremiah to be speaking of Christ when he asks ‘He is a man, and who shall know him?’<sup>102</sup> For, despite the appearances of Christ as man to the faithful – and even unfaithful – of the Old Testament, it is only through his visible portrayal in flesh – in particular upon the cross – that either God or man could be properly known. Thus whilst Moses could speak with Jesus, Irenaeus could write:

And the Word spake to Moses, appearing before him, “just as any one might speak to his friend.” But Moses desired to see Him openly who was speaking

<sup>99</sup> *in figura locutus est humana ad Abraham*, AH 4.7.4.

<sup>100</sup> *Dial.* 128; cf. *Dial.* 56, 58, 59, 61, 126. It is interesting to note here the similarity to von Rad’s bold statement that ‘Israel conceives even Yahweh himself as having human form.’ (Rad, G. von, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), I:145).

<sup>101</sup> Houssiau, A., *La Christologie de S. Irenée* (Louvain: 1955), 127, cited in Ochagavía, J., *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus’ Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Romae: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 85

<sup>102</sup> Jer. 17:9 (LXX), quoted in AH 3.19.2; 4.33.11



with him, and was thus addressed: “Stand in the deep place of the rock, and with My hand I will cover thee. But when My splendour shall pass by, then thou shalt see My back, but My face thou shalt not see: for no man sees My face, and shall live.” Two facts are thus signified: that it is impossible for man to see God; and that, through the wisdom of God, man shall see Him in the last times, in the depth of a rock, that is, in His coming as a man.<sup>103</sup>

The project of man would entail a gracious revelation of Himself in and to man (which for Moses was to be at the transfiguration).<sup>104</sup> Yet this in no sense diminishes the immediate truth of the revelation received by Moses: Moses was one of the faithful that had personally met with Jesus, the Rock of Israel, and understood that he was the mediator to the Father on Sinai who – in contrast to the veiling of the law to rebellious minds – would be revealed through the Spirit. In Himself, the Word is the visible form, the manifestation and measure of the Father, even antecedent to the incarnation.

To say that the Son *incarnate* is the necessary mediator of the knowledge of the Father comes down to favouring the position of the opponents by granting that there was no knowledge of the Father in the Old Testament. Irenaeus’ endeavour is precisely to show that there is no fundamental difference between the Old and New Testaments regarding man’s knowledge of God: the Father is always known in and through the Son.<sup>105</sup>

Also, following Paul’s willingness to use the human name ‘Jesus’ when speaking of the Word as agent of creation in 1 Corinthians 8:6 (and elsewhere), Irenaeus sees the human name ‘Jesus’ as most proper to the pre-incarnate Son of God, ‘who also, having been anointed with the Holy Spirit, is called Jesus Christ.’<sup>106</sup> This appears to be another instance of following Justin’s lead, seeing ‘Jesus’ as the human name, in particular because of Moses’ renaming of his servant Hoshea (Αωση υἱὸν Ναυη) as Joshua (Ἰησοῦς).<sup>107</sup>

Harnack observes:

<sup>103</sup> AH 4.20.9; cf. 4.9.1; 4.20.11; 4.26.1; 5.5.2

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Dem. 44

<sup>105</sup> Ochagavía, 95

<sup>106</sup> AH 3.12.7; cf. Dem. 43ff.

<sup>107</sup> Frag. 19; Dial. 90, 91, 113, 116, 131

Irenaeus, as a rule, made Jesus Christ, whom he views as God and man, the *starting-point* of his speculation. Here he followed the Fourth Gospel and Ignatius. It is of Jesus that Irenaeus almost always thinks when he speaks of the Logos or the Son of God; and therefore he does not identify the divine element in Christ or Christ himself with the world idea or the creating Word or the Reason of God. That he nevertheless makes Logos (μονογενής, πρωτότοκος, “only begotten”, “first born”) the regular designation of Christ as the pre-existent One can only be explained from the apologetic tradition which in his time was already recognised as authoritative by Christian scholars, and moreover appeared justified and required by John 1:1.<sup>108</sup>

Certainly it is clear that Irenaeus thinks of the Logos as Jesus, and not an Hellenic metaphysical principle. However, it seems extraordinary, given the weight of Irenaeus’ invective against those who would divide Jesus Christ, to suggest that he does not therefore identify him with the Word as agent of creation. As we have seen above, Jesus as one of the ‘hands’ of the Father is a more pervasive theme than a mere concession to apologetic tradition could be. Then there is need for great care in handling Harnack’s suggestion that Jesus Christ is the starting point of Irenaeus’ thought. For we should not imagine that in some sense Irenaeus’ divine Λόγος is a proto-Kantian projection of the incarnate One onto eternity (such as the eternal λόγος ἔνσαρκος that some commentators, such as Ochagavía, see him championing).<sup>109</sup> Some of the Gnostics espoused the myth that

the Propator of the whole, Proarche, and Proanenkoetos is called Anthropos; and that this is the great and abstruse mystery, namely, that the Power which is above all others, and contains all in his embrace, is termed Anthropos; hence does the Saviour style himself the ‘Son of man.’<sup>110</sup>

Yet it was precisely such Gnostic mythologising of the historical that Irenaeus sought to contest, believing that in the true man Jesus Christ he has the original and answer to the mythology of Ἄνθρωπος and all its cognates. In contrast to those myths, Irenaeus does not dream of a self-contained salvation history in eternity, where Ἄνθρωπος, as

<sup>108</sup> Harnack, Vol. 2, 262-3; cf. 2, 240

<sup>109</sup> Ochagavía, 56

<sup>110</sup> AH 1.12.4; cf. 1.30.1-15



one of the αἰώνιοι, is a protagonist, which is then reproduced and so known in time through the part of ἄνθρωπος being played by the man Jesus. Jesus, the Image and Word of God, had his actuality with God before his assumption of flesh, by which he revealed himself most fully. To place the birth of Jesus Christ in eternity, as an eternal λόγος ἔνσαρκος doctrine would require, would be to violate Irenaeus' prohibition on speculation about the eternal generation of the Son.<sup>111</sup> Also, though Irenaeus does not mention it, Tertullian devotes his *De Carne Christi* to overthrowing the doctrine, attributable to Apelles and the Valentinians in particular, that Christ's flesh was of a celestial nature.<sup>112</sup> It was teaching just such as this that Irenaeus was alluding to in his assault on the notion that Christ passed through Mary 'as water through a tube', for the consequences would again be a cleaved Christ and the Gnostic monism-panteism so reminiscent of the ontological division of *Sophia/Achamoth*.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, it appears that Irenaeus did accept the pre-incarnate existence of a λόγος ἔνσαρκος, writing as he would of an historical σάρκωσις that he never projected back into eternity.<sup>114</sup>

Instead, the anthropomorphic Christophanies of the Old Testament and the use of the human name for the pre-incarnate Λόγος should be understood as a denial, not of a λόγος ἔνσαρκος, but of a λόγος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος. For Irenaeus then, 'man' (*verus homo*) is not entirely coterminous with 'creature', given that the Son was always before the Father, not indeed as creature, but as man.<sup>115</sup> The Son as the glory of the Father is eternally the glory of God: the *vivens homo*.<sup>116</sup> 'Thus then the Word of God in all things has the pre-eminence for that He is True Man and Wonderful Counsellor and

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Hamack, Vol. 2, 262ff

<sup>112</sup> Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 8, 15.

<sup>113</sup> *AH* 1.7.2; 3.11.3; 3.21.10; 4.33.2. The work ascribed to Athanasius, *Against Apollinaris*, objected to this reading of Apollinaris on the basis that an eternal λόγος ἔνσαρκος would either assume or result in mere pantheism: εἰ δὲ ὁμοούσιος τοῦ λόγου ἡ σὰρξ καὶ συναΐδιος, ἐκ τούτου ἐρεῖτε καὶ τὰ πάντα κτίσματα συναΐδια τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι θεῷ (ii, 12).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Farrow, D., 'St. Irenaeus of Lyons: The Church and the World.' *Pro Ecclesia* 4.3, Summer 1995, 340-3; also Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 140. The question of the λόγος ἔνσαρκος is one to which we shall return below in chapters 3-4 in particular.

<sup>115</sup> Ironically for Irenaeus in his opposition to Gnostic perversions, James Dunn recognises this position within the apostolic and post-apostolic church, believing he can trace it back to Philo's 'heavenly man'. (Dunn, J. D. G., *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980), §15 'Pre-existent Man? (113-25).) Philo's 'heavenly man' (*Migr. Abr.* 220; *Leg. All.* I.31) is the Word (*Conf. Ling.* 41:62-3, 146-7), and possibly high priest (*De Som.* 188, reading LXX Lev 16:17 πᾶς ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔσται ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ). This is particularly interesting in the light of the current revision in Philo studies. So, Margaret Barker writes 'Philo, as I shall show, drew his theology from the most ancient traditions of Israel and not from an amalgam of hellenized Judaism and contemporary Greek philosophy, as is so often suggested.' (Barker, M., *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 48)

<sup>116</sup> *AH* 4.20.7; cf. 3.20.2

Mighty God calling men anew to fellowship with God.’<sup>117</sup> All of which cuts across the grain of Harnack’s contention that for Irenaeus

the perfect manhood of the incarnate Logos was merely an incidental quality he possessed. In reality the Logos is the perfect man in so far as his incarnation creates the perfect man and renders him possible, or the Logos always exists behind Christ the perfect man.<sup>118</sup>

Whilst Adam was a type of the One who would recapitulate his life, he was not simply a foreshadow, but a copy of the true Image who was already – not just proleptically – *verus homo*. Here, Minns grasps the literalism of Irenaeus’ understanding of Adam as τύπος of Christ, even if he fails to understand its proper referent: Adam, he holds, ‘does not simply prefigure Christ, but bears in his own body the lineaments of the incarnate Son of God.’<sup>119</sup> Yet Irenaeus never states that it is the lineaments of the *incarnate* Son of God that Adam bears. In fact, such a reading all too readily starts to bear a resemblance to the thought of Gnostic teachers against which Irenaeus sought to contrast and define the faith. Theodotus, for instance (some of whose writings were preserved by Clement of Alexandria), taught that the Son was only ‘drawn in outline in the beginning’.<sup>120</sup> For Irenaeus, who saw Christ’s pre-mundane actuality as intrinsic to the whole οἰκονομία, this was unacceptable. Instead, his conception of Adam as τύπος is one in which τύπος has the sense of an indentation, made possible by the presence of the reality: the man of dust reflecting in his being the imprint of the present man of heaven. Christ

traced His own form on the formation (πλάσμα), that that which should be seen should be Godlike (θεοειδής): for (as) the image of God was man formed and set on the earth. And that he might become living, He breathed on his face the breath of life; that both according to the breath and according to the formation man should be like God.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Dem. 40

<sup>118</sup> Harnack, 2, 284

<sup>119</sup> Minns, 86

<sup>120</sup> Cited by Clement of Alexandria in *Excerpts*, 19

<sup>121</sup> Dem. 11

As Ochagavía put it in commenting on *AH* 5.16.2, ‘Irenaeus is saying at this point that man’s body was made after the image of the Word, which presupposes that according to Irenaeus even before the incarnation the Word possessed some sort of human form or shape.’<sup>122</sup> If Adam’s imperfection as man was the necessary imperfection of contingent and created being, Irenaeus was looking for an uncreated man (as opposed to the eternal existence of createdness in a λόγος ἔνσαρκος): the Image as the truly human humanity of God. Thus Pannenberg’s concern, that if the Image refers to the λόγος ἄσαρκος, not the incarnate One, then ‘the Christological statements about Jesus Christ as the image of the eternal God no longer ha[ve] any relevance to our general divine likeness’, is answered.<sup>123</sup> The λόγος ἄσαρκος is not a λόγος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος. The οἰκονομία θεοῦ is rooted in the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, and not in its pivotal key, the incarnation. Man’s archetype is therefore the eternal man revealed in the incarnation, but not the incarnation *per se*. It must be noted that this is not the sort of hubristic anthropocentrism that falls foul of Montaigne’s gibe that if horses had gods, they would look like horses. Irenaeus in no sense imagines divine humanity to be a heavenly mirror giving the erroneous impression of an anthropomorphic deity to the simple minded. Instead, here it is Adam that is Christomorphic. We might, of course, seek to critique Irenaeus from the other side: has he been drawing Platonic archetypes into his gnosis? The problem is, however strong the critique might appear today, it probably would not have worried Irenaeus himself, Plato being widely regarded at the time as having simply plagiarised Moses, specifically as he sought to model the Law as a whole, and the tabernacle in particular, κατὰ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἐπουρανίων (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5).<sup>124</sup>

If we follow suit, and plagiarise Cicero, Jesus Christ was then, before the incarnation, not simply *homo futurus* but *homo humanus*; the first and true man who

<sup>122</sup> Ochagavía, 90. Ochagavía reads this as evidence of a λόγος ἔνσαρκος rather than a λόγος ἄσαρκος that is not a λόγος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος. Nevertheless, his point is still germane.

<sup>123</sup> Pannenberg, Vol. 2, 209

<sup>124</sup> With the tabernacle/temple in mind, Margaret Barker has suggested that, in Old Testament liturgical terms, all the mysteries of God and his creation, including those concerning man, were held in the Holy of Holies represented in the Jerusalem temple. Man, like God, could not be understood otherwise. Occasionally, however, as the high priest annually entered the Jerusalem sanctuary, so especially favoured individuals were granted an insight into the state behind the true temple veil. ‘To be granted this vision was a special privilege; the mysterious Prayer of David gives thanks for such a vision: ‘You have caused me to see the vision of the Man on high [or perhaps ‘the Man of eternity’], the LORD God [or O LORD God]’ (1 Chron. 17.17; this is a literal rendering of the Hebrew, with ‘vision’ drawn from the LXX).’ Jesus is the Man on high, the LORD God. Furthermore, in his work and role as the great high priest, he opens up the mystery of the Holy of Holies, so revealing in his ascension the mystery of man (Barker, M., *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003), 180).



would come after the second (Adam) and so make visible what he eternally was. Thus he was the one of whom the Baptist could say *ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἄνθρωπος ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν*.<sup>125</sup> Rather than manhood being an incidental quality he – *aeon*-like – could render possible, what he was, that he also appeared to be.<sup>126</sup> This logic can be seen in Irenaeus' intriguing exposition of Gen 38:27-30, in which the firstborn of the twins in Tamar's womb, marked by scarlet for suffering, is born after the second.<sup>127</sup> So faith precedes law and the firstborn man Christ precedes the man Adam, such that as Abraham's faith was real, so too was Christ's true manhood (though not yet flesh). It was precisely for this reason, argued Irenaeus, that 'the Lord did declare that the first should in truth be last, and the last first.'<sup>128</sup>

It is for this reason above all that he can understand there to be a consonance between God and man in Christ, for the Christological paradox is not to be located there, but in the incarnate Christ's being both Man and man, Creator and created. It is thus that he is able to string together a catena of Old Testament messianic prophecies, rolling together descriptions of humiliation and exaltation: 'He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God, coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men.'<sup>129</sup> After the description of Jesus as the Lord of Israel, Irenaeus turns to the portrayal of the son to be born in Isaiah 9, inserting the description of Christ as the 'most handsome of *men*' from Psalm 45:2 and then the picture of Daniel's Son of Man, coming on the clouds.

Oscar Cullmann's appraisal of Irenaeus' Christology thus seems remarkably prescient: Irenaeus, he writes,

was the only one of the ecclesiastical writers of the second century to grasp the depth of Paul's idea about the Son of Man. His entire Christology is dominated by the contrast between Adam and Christ, and he makes the only attempt in the whole history of doctrine to build a Christology on the concept 'Man'.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> John 1:30; cf. *AH* 3.10.2

<sup>126</sup> Cf. *AH* 2.22.4

<sup>127</sup> *AH* 4.25

<sup>128</sup> *AH* 3.22.4 (Matt. 19:30; 20:16)

<sup>129</sup> *AH* 3.19.2

<sup>130</sup> Cullmann, 189



Cullmann then ends his examination of the concept of 'The Son of Man' (a concept to which we will return) with a, perhaps rather too audacious, hope that

a modern theologian would undertake to build a Christology entirely on the New Testament idea of the Son of Man. Not only would such a Christology be entirely oriented to the New Testament and go back to Jesus' self-designation; it would also have the advantage of putting the logically insoluble problem of the two natures of Christ on a level where the solution becomes visible: the pre-existent Son of Man, who is with God already at the very beginning and exists with him as his image, is *by his very nature* divine Man.<sup>131</sup>

It may seem extraordinary, then, that Irenaeus could be accused of impugning the humanity of Christ. And yet it is to Apollinarius, who has classically been understood to do just this in suggesting that the Logos took the place of the human soul in the incarnate Jesus Christ, that he has been compared.<sup>132</sup> However, having cleared him of the charge of proto-Eutychianism, there is a similarity between the two that is startling only if it is forgotten how Monophysite he can appear. The following description of Apollinarius' Christology is illuminating in its resemblance to Irenaeus:

According to Apollinaris, the Logos is not only the image of God but the archetype of manhood. He was eternally predestined to become man, and bore within Himself, so to speak, the 'potency' of Incarnation. In this sense Apollinaris spoke of Christ's human nature as pre-existent. Christ was the pre-existent heavenly man, as being destined for the Incarnation. So Apollinaris understood the expression of S. Jo. iii. 13, *The Son of man which is in heaven*, and the statement of S. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 47), *The second man is from heaven*. The Logos, who supplied the place of the human soul in Christ, was in no sense foreign to the essence of humanity; rather he was 'the truth of human nature' – that without which it could not attain the goal of its development. Accordingly, from this point of view, human nature (σάρξ in the wider sense of the term, i.e. ἄνθρωπος) was in a sense coeternal with the Logos, not something adventitious, but something 'consubstantial and connatural'; man's nature pre-

<sup>131</sup> Cullmann 192, original italics.

<sup>132</sup> Osborn, 111; Duncker, L., *Des heiligen Irenäus Christologie im Zusammenhange mit dessen theologischer und anthropologischer Grundlehre* (Göttingen: 1843), 206.

existed in God. The human birth of the Son of God was indeed an act of self-humiliation (κένωσις), but only in the sense that to be the archetypical man is a higher state of existence than to be actually man and to pass through the stages of human history.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, not only is it a misunderstanding to read Apollinarius as imagining that the flesh of Christ pre-existed (as perhaps Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa understood him to be teaching<sup>134</sup>), but also it would be erroneous to imagine that Apollinarius conceived of a less than fully human Christ. While the similarity to Irenaeus may diminish with his understanding of human pre-existence to be a mere ‘potency’ (an understanding that would appear to stem more from Ottley than Apollinarius), Apollinarius’ incarnate Logos would have been complete man, given that he was already such in eternity (προϋπάρχει ὁ ἄνθρωπος Χριστός<sup>135</sup>). This was not the heresy with which he was charged. His error had been that he had not closed himself to Gregory of Nazianzus’ soteriological charge: τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον.<sup>136</sup>

The purpose of incarnation in Irenaeus’ vision of the economy will be dealt with more thoroughly below in the second and third chapters. For the moment though, it can be seen that incarnation was exactly that: σάρκωσις (correctly translated *incarnatio*), becoming the *plasma* of Adam, and could never simply be expanded to what would, for Irenaeus, be the more misleading term ἐνανθρωπήσις.<sup>137</sup> Because Christ’s assumption of flesh was a real addition to his eternal being, incarnation could never be seen as a mere theophany or shadow of a hidden spiritual reality. Indeed, it brought ‘all possible novelty’ in bringing the flesh of Adam to its τέλος.<sup>138</sup> This true man would come as man to bring fallen man to perfection.

<sup>133</sup> Ottley, R. L., *The Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: Methuen, 1896), Vol. II, 56-7

<sup>134</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa seem to have understood Apollinaris this way: ‘If anyone assert that His flesh came down from heaven, and is not from hence, nor of us though above us, let him be anathema.’ (Gregory Nazianzen, ‘To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius’ in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 2*, Vol. 7 ed A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (repr. Peabody, MASS.: 1994), 440). Cf. Prestige, 107-8. However, he quite specifically denied this in condemning ‘the utter madness of those who say that the flesh is consubstantial with God’ (Fräg. 159; cf. Raven, 217).

<sup>135</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise against Apollinaris*, 13

<sup>136</sup> Raven notes that Gregory the Theologian’s clause is ‘the fundamental argument against Apollinarius’ even though he goes on to note that it ‘seems to reflect a mechanical notion of salvation, like Irenaeus’ “He gave His soul for our souls, and His body for our bodies”’ (Raven, 258).

<sup>137</sup> *Dem.* 31

<sup>138</sup> *AH* 4.34.1; cf. 3.22.1; 4.33; 5.1.3

### A Revised Methodology

Before proceeding to ask the ‘what?’ question of man, it is worth pausing to note how different a plumbline Irenaeus has provided for pursuing the task of anthropology: instead of Γνωθὶ Σεαυτόν, we are commanded Γνωθὶ Χριστόν. On this pitch, all introspective quests for gnosis of man stumble on the *norma normans non normata* that is the eternal man revealed in the incarnation: Jesus who was anointed to be Jesus Christ.

Did all those who have been mentioned, with whom you have been proved to coincide in expression, know, or not know, the truth? If they knew it, then the descent of the Saviour into this world was superfluous. For why [in that case] did He descend? Was it that He might bring that truth which was [already] known to the knowledge of those who knew it?<sup>139</sup>

Any anthropology that has not started from this point, according to Irenaeus, is ruled out not just by virtue of the fall, but creation too, since Adam was only ever ‘after the image’ of the Image (κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϛ). In fact, given that ἀ-λήθεια, as Heraclitus observed, is a privative expression, speaking of non-concealment, for Jesus to be ‘true’ man entails that without the revelation of this man, the nature of humanity is concealed to man.<sup>140</sup> His anthropology simply expresses his overall theological methodology: ἐὰν μὴ πιστεύσητε οὐδὲ μὴ συνῆτε (if you do not believe, neither will you understand).<sup>141</sup> In no sense could Irenaeus ever conceive of anthropology as ‘deficient Christology’ and Christology as ‘realised anthropology’.<sup>142</sup> As Blaise Pascal was to put it: ‘Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature; learn that man infinitely transcends man, and learn from your Master your true condition, of which you are ignorant. Hear God.’<sup>143</sup> It was in part for this reason that Irenaeus could lump the theologically impoverished Ebionites in with the plethora of Gnostic sects, for any merely fleshly

<sup>139</sup> AH 2.14.7; cf. 3.12.6; 4.20

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Heidegger, M., *Being and Time* E.T. of *Sein und Zeit* by Stambaugh, J., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 204

<sup>141</sup> Isa 7:9, LXX, cited in *Dem.* 3

<sup>142</sup> Rahner, K., *Theological Investigations*, Vol.1, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd/New York: Seabury, 1961), 117

<sup>143</sup> Pascal, B., *The Pensées*, translated by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1961), 434



Jesus will not be truly man but a truncated or invertedly Docetic Christ, in that he only appears to be man without being the reality and revelation of Man. Not being saved by the Image, one of the 'hands' of the economy, means they cannot be saved at all.

A word of caution should be sounded here, however. Irenaeus has not made the claim that it is possible to read anthropology straight from Christology, imagining that the two overlap entirely. Instead, rather than simply attaching the name 'Jesus Christ' to an *aeon*-like universal standard of humanity, he sees Jesus as not simply Man, but a man. He is a specific particularity defined geographically, temporally, socially, racially, and of course, sexually. In dealing with this question, Francis Watson asserts the entirely secondary nature of this particularity:

If in Jesus we learn what it is to be human, then part of what we learn is that to be human is not in the first instance a matter of gender, race or class. Jesus was male, a Jew and an artisan, but to describe him as the image of God is to assert that his humanity transcends his maleness, his Jewishness, and his artisan-status: 'For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him' (Rom. 10.12).<sup>144</sup>

Yet it will become clear below that Irenaeus is unable to dismiss this particularity as secondary. For him, Jesus Christ is more than *ἄνθρωπος ἀληθής*; he is not just incidentally, but specifically and most significantly *ἄνθρωπος ἀληθής*. It is just this particularity that will serve as an underlying theme for the following chapters.

However, for the moment, if faith is concerned with finding reality externally to ourselves, then Irenaeus has presented not some compartmentalised 'life of faith', but human reality – Man – as to be found *extra se in Christo*. A revolution in identity, because the most profoundly personal, is necessarily the hardest to stomach. And yet, to a culture characterised by the acedia of ego-loss and weightlessness, further exacerbated by the problems of human uniqueness and species differentiation heralded by genetic modification and the advent of artificial intelligence, this is indispensable: my identity, reality and hope, are not, contra the self-realisation movement, to be found within my own fickle self. Rather, vitally for the church of Lugdunum and beyond, he

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<sup>144</sup> Watson, F., *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 286



called for the priority of reality and potential in Christ as opposed to the present experience of persecution.

Yet the modern West is in a rather different situation to the church of Lugdunum. Commenting on Psalm 8 ('What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet...') in his great work on anthropology, Reinhold Niebuhr states:

the vantage point from which man judges his insignificance is a rather significant vantage point. This fact has not been lost on the moderns, whose modesty before the cosmic immensity was modified considerably by pride in their discovery of this immensity.<sup>145</sup>

The irony is, that in reaching out across the cosmos for objective information, man only found himself to be more of a riddle, the cadaver of his identity only the worse for all the dissection it had undergone. It is when such pride at man's exaltation, or the Genesis command to subdue the earth, is not primarily understood Christologically that the ecological movement steps in to protest at Adam's tyranny. Here Irenaeus presents Protagoras bound: '...at present we do not see everything subject to him [man]. *But we see Jesus*' (Hebrews 2:8-9).

Developing the Greek concept of an essentially reasonable *humanitas*, the Roman stoics, and particularly Cicero, contrasted *homo romanus* with *homo humanus*, the ideal of the moral and cultured man. This ideal was necessarily governed by a Delphic methodology, as Cicero reveals in his aphorism *homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*.<sup>146</sup> Yet, as uncreated, Irenaeus' *homo humanus* cannot be seen to be a simple extrapolation of the best in society. Indeed, by having no other gauge by which to judge humanity, he is able to conceive Jesus of Nazareth in very different terms to what expectation might demand: 'as the ark [of the covenant] was gilded within and without with pure gold, so was also the body of Christ pure and resplendent; for it was adorned within by the Word, and shielded without by the Spirit.'<sup>147</sup> A possibly

<sup>145</sup> Niebuhr, R., *The Nature and Destiny of Man* Vol. 1. (London: Nisbet, 1941), 3

<sup>146</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis* I, 30

<sup>147</sup> Frag. 8; cf. Frag. 48. There is a similarity here to the Christology of the puritan John Owen, who otherwise held to a very different Christological model. Owen saw that in Christ, 'being formed pure and exact by the Holy Ghost, there was no disposition or tendency in his constitution to the least deviation from perfect holiness in any kind.' Indeed, 'as to our bodily diseases and distempers which

illuminative paradigm is offered by Irenaeus' dictum 'He may most properly be termed Light, but he is not like that light with which we are acquainted.'<sup>148</sup> He had already showed himself to be quite aware of the Gnostic merging of the concepts of light and man which, in part, had derived from the ambivalence of the word φῶς (both 'light' and 'man').<sup>149</sup> Adam, in being created κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϛ, was created, like the Sun, to shine forth in the created realm in reflection of the true Light of the world, the *imago Dei*. It might be as though he were saying: 'He may most properly be termed Man, but he is not like that man with which we are acquainted.'

However, could all this simply shift the Gnostic Abyss from between God and man and relocate it between Man and man? This would be a strange reading of Irenaeus, who saw that whilst Man is to be found *extra se*, this cannot be interpreted to be an endorsement of some aloof proclamation of a gospel unearthed to experienced reality. That is the point of incarnation: this One became as we are so that we might become as He is.

In contrast, all anthropologies that have sought to ask 'what?' of man first, before determining where the proper object of anthropological study lies, have necessarily slid towards qualification-based understandings of man, man being reduced to subsistence as a mere featherless biped. Even those attempts to break free from the monster of introspection have all too often foundered on functional descriptions, the result, for example, of quality comparisons with other animals (such lists of features that supposedly distinguish man from other animals inevitably undergoing systematic condemnation from Darwinian evangelists seeking to display such features as common to other animals).<sup>150</sup> Yet it might be argued that this is precisely the import of Paul's argument in Romans 1:23. When man ceases to understand himself in reference to the true *imago Dei* he is compelled then to understand himself in reference to the animals. If true, this places such anthropology right within the ambit of perverted worship.

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adhere unto us upon the disorder and vice of our constitutions, he was absolutely free from them.' Owen, J., *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. III ed. W.H. Goold (repr. Edinburgh: BOTT, 1991), 167

<sup>148</sup> *Lumen rectissime dicetur, sed nihil simile ei, quod est secundum nos lumini.* (AH 2.13.4)

<sup>149</sup> AH 1.8.5

<sup>150</sup> Colin Gunton has demonstrated the way in which this argument for the distinctive ontology of the human is very near to the traditional form of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, in which it is man's finite reason that distinguishes him from the irrationality of animals and the infinity of God. Here it is the property of the human mind that provides a criterion of radical discontinuity from the rest of creation. In sharp contrast to what we shall see below of Irenaeus' theology of animals, this model all too often reduces animals to mere mechanistic beings, their cries of pain perhaps being no more than the squeaks of unlubricated machinery. (Gunton, C. E., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 100-1.)

Certainly this is how Irenaeus understood the γνωστικοί, who, with their logical starting point of the disparity between spirit and flesh, found themselves, by virtue of their distinct spiritual ontology, to be the elite amongst a divided race of men: '[t]hey conceive, then, of three kinds of men, spiritual, material, and animal, represented by Cain, Abel, and Seth. These three natures are no longer found in one person, but constitute various kinds [of men].'<sup>151</sup> So essential was the ontological distinction between these classes of men, that, as Gustaf Wingren put it, even 'God is powerless before this predestination from below'.<sup>152</sup> Such was the divisiveness of this schema that it segregated not only men from each other, but component part from component part within each man.<sup>153</sup> With no Christological ballast to preserve the concept of the whole man, each person could be further divided, even given his adherence to the correct doctrine of the day, since the body would, in any case, always be incapable of sharing in salvation.<sup>154</sup> It is no coincidence that the Gnostic scheme, with its inhuman deity, also saw what Foucault could later announce: the effective death of man.

Christian anthropology has not tended to follow Irenaeus. In its detailing of the attributes of humanity, theology has not on the whole related or grounded its thinking in the manifestation of the Word as man. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that this man is the one despised and rejected of men. Instead, the Hellenic assumption has remained pervasive, that to be man is to stand in opposition and concealment – as opposed to relationship and incarnational revelation – of God. A part of this has been the philosophical tradition of the Academy with its supposition of the priority of the work over the person – 'we become just by doing just acts'.<sup>155</sup> The results are abstractly or introspectively conceived properties that bear little sense of the dynamism Irenaeus envisaged as the project of man. Such definitions – seen most classically in Boethius' classification of the person as *naturae rationalis individua substantia* – are unavoidably qualitative.

The ethical fallout is catastrophic, for on such a basis life, death, health and identity are imparted on the basis of qualifications inherent in the individual: has the inhuman-sounding 'embryo' or 'foetus' yet qualified for humanity? Are those who

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<sup>151</sup> AH 1.7.5; cf. 1.5.6; 1.6.2

<sup>152</sup> Wingren, 36

<sup>153</sup> AH 1.24.1

<sup>154</sup> AH 1.27.3

<sup>155</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and intro. by D. Ross; revised by J. L. Ackrill and J. O. Urmson (Oxford & New York: OUP, 1998), 29



have been born fulfilled enough *in themselves* to retain that status?<sup>156</sup> With so functional and atomistic a concept of identity, it is small wonder that unemployment evokes such disorientation and fear. As for divisions, the lynchings of the Deep South, South African apartheid and the holocaust hardly seem a stone's throw away from the Gnostic elitism based on ontological difference. The striking Memphis sanitation workers of the spring of 1968 perhaps expressed the problem most poignantly with their placards reading 'I am a man'. The campaign for euthanasia is only the ironic flipside of this: either I am no longer a man, or it does not matter that I am, for a 'quality of life' is missing.

True, it has not yet been established in what sense we might be human if Jesus Christ alone is truly Man. We can see a very different approach to the question, though, as we turn to it now. Yet for the moment we can certainly go so far as to say that, given the Image's assumption of our flesh, on the basis not of individual qualification but incarnation, humanity in Christ is *simul homo humanus et peccator*.

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<sup>156</sup> A potential counter-argument, that the ethical issue at stake is a question of personhood, as opposed to humanity *per se*, draws on a theoretical distinction that, of course, was not a clear option on the second century philosophical menu. It is when the debate moves on to such territory, so well-trodden by trinitarian and later Christological deliberation, that it rests on far surer ground.



## 2

## What is Man?

Given Irenaeus' denial of a λόγος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, two questions in particular arise: If the Λόγος alone is *verus homo*, in what sense might we creatures be understood as men (under which question comes the demand that Irenaeus prove he has not formed an abyss between Ἄνθρωπος and σάρξ)? And, related to that, secondly, if ἄνθρωπος is taken to be an eternal category, in what sense does he understand incarnation? The two questions we propose to unite as a double-barrelled expression of the one cry of Psalm 8: 'What is man that you remember him, and the son of man that you attend to him? You made him a little lower than the gods, and crown him with glory and honour.'



## Spirit and Man

In both Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2, the question ‘what is man?’ assumes an immediate connection between the identity of man and his humiliation and exaltation. For Irenaeus, that humiliation is first seen or intimated in the original constitution of Adam. Some superficial similarity can be seen here between Irenaeus and his adversaries in that neither saw Adam as being imbued with the πνεῦμα θεοῦ, nor saw that as coterminous with the πνοή ζωής.<sup>1</sup> Yet this was no theological larceny on Irenaeus’ part: whilst the Gnostic agenda arose from the perceived necessity of partitioning spirit and matter, for Irenaeus this was the result of a conception of an intimacy between Spirit and man that was entirely antithetical to any such rift. Adam was not *verus homo*, but only κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκότος, a τύπος of the true Man (to be understood as an indentation, made possible by the presence of the reality).<sup>2</sup> As such, he was never ἄνθρωπος πνευματικόν but only ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν, filled with typical breath in order that he might fulfil his role as τύπος of the one filled with the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> *Pace* Behr, it can be seen that with this, Irenaeus showed himself to be stepping away from the Platonic notion of ψυχή as the mediate principle of life between φύσις and νοῦς.<sup>4</sup> Whilst he can see ψυχή as the governor and ruler of the body, this is so, not in the sense of an independent principle of animation, but only in its essential function as passive recipient of the life conferred by God.<sup>5</sup>

[T]he soul herself is not life, but partakes in that life bestowed upon her by God. Wherefore also the prophetic word declares of the first-formed man, “He became a living soul,” teaching us that by the participation of life the soul

<sup>1</sup> AH 5.12.2; Gen. 2:7. If the shibboleth of Gnosticism was Γινῶθι Σεαυτόν, the primary question had to be ‘what is the true self?’. For Valentinus, this was the spirit, not the soul. Cf. Brown, P., *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 109

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Philo, *On the Creation*, 25

<sup>3</sup> Cf. AH 1.5ff.; 3.24.1; 5.7.1; 5.12.1-2; Dem. 11, 14; 1 Cor. 15:45-7

<sup>4</sup> ‘Irenaeus is not interested so much in the soul itself, as a principle of interiority, as in its animation of the flesh.’ (Behr, J., *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York; OUP, 2000), 91). Behr is surely right to note Irenaeus’ avoidance of the soul as a principle of interiority, and yet to describe it as the means of the flesh’s animation again seems to give to the soul a more active role than Irenaeus allows for it.

<sup>5</sup> AH 2.33.4

became alive; so that the soul, and the life which it possesses, must be understood as being separate existences.<sup>6</sup>

Irenaeus was certainly no Hebraist, as can be seen in a number of peculiar translation attempts, that appear to be the result of a reliance on some unknown, dubious source.<sup>7</sup> However, in this he is entirely consonant with the Hebrew concept of נֶפֶשׁ (LXX ψυχή), a word with the basic meaning of throat.<sup>8</sup> Through the throat, the breath of life is taken to the flesh through the blood, meaning that life could be characterised by breathing, and the end of life by 'breathing one's last'.<sup>9</sup> As such, for Adam to be נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (ψυχὴ ζῶσα), is for him to be intrinsically passive and needy, in particular for רִיחַ (πνεῦμα). Thus, Irenaeus feels, 'every one will allow that we are a body taken from the earth, and a soul receiving spirit from God.'<sup>10</sup> Whilst the point is to some extent incidental for the purposes of this paper, it can be seen that much of traditional psychology's depiction of the soul as an almost entirely separate entity (famously said by Descartes to be coupled to the body via the pineal gland<sup>11</sup>) is entirely alien to Irenaeus' psychology. Without doubt he held that the continuity of the resurrection body from present existence was dependent upon the separability of the soul and its ongoing existence after the putrefaction or destruction of the flesh. Yet, perhaps because he was freed by his methodology from the felt need to derive the basis of human distinction from a dual ontology (which distinction he did not root in the possession of an *anima*, given the solidarity of the sixth day, with the creation account's attribution of *animae* to the animals), he never conceived a dualistic anthropology in which one, non-material part

<sup>6</sup> AH 2.34.4; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 4-6

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 'Moreover, *Jesus*, which is a word belonging to the proper tongue of the Hebrews, contains, as the learned among them declare, two letters and a half, and signifies that Lord who contains heaven and earth; for *Jesus* in the ancient Hebrew language means "heaven"' AH 2.24.2 (cf. Harvey's explanation, I, 335-6, n.4); 'the Hebrew word "Satan" signifies an apostate' (AH 5.21.2). Finally, '*Eloae* and *Eloeth* in the Hebrew language signify "that which contains all"' (AH 2.35.3), which passage Frend, somewhat eccentrically, takes as evidence of Irenaeus' real acquaintance with the language (Frend, W. H. C., *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 244).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Prov. 25:5; 27:7; Psa. 107:9; 42:1f; Wolff, H. W., *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1974), 10-25

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14; Deu. 12:23; cf. AH 5.3.2

<sup>10</sup> *Nos autem quoniam corpus sumus de terra acceptum, et anima accipiens a Deo spiritum, omnis quicunque confitebitur*, AH 3.22.1

<sup>11</sup> In response to Descartes, Laurence Sterne had Walter Shandy humourously 'prove' that the soul does not reside in the brain's pineal gland. So Tristram Shandy: 'If death, said my father, reasoning with himself, is nothing but the separation of the soul from the body; and if it is true that people can walk about and do their business without brains, then certes the soul does not inhabit there. Q. E. D.' (Sterne, L., *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, eds. M. and J. New (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), vol. 2, ch. 19).

is revered as in some sense quasi-divine whilst the other, material part is relegated to the condition of being a mere container.

In contrast to needy ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν – and, indeed, the self-styled πνευματικοί – he sees Jesus, anointed with the Spirit, as the true Man, for ‘where the Spirit of the Father is, there is Living Man’.<sup>12</sup> The Word as archetype of humanity is the ἄνθρωπος πνευματικόν, ‘the receptacle of all His Wisdom and power’.<sup>13</sup> Thus in no sense is this true man deficient. It is he, and not (as the peculiar optimism of the Enlightenment had supposed) fallen man, who is the true *homo sapiens*, the man filled and equipped with the *Sapientia* of God.

Hence also was Adam himself termed by Paul “the figure of Him that was to come,” because the Word, the Maker of all things, had formed beforehand for Himself the future dispensation of the human race, connected with the Son of God; God having predestined that the first man should be of an animal nature, with this view, that he might be saved by the spiritual One.<sup>14</sup>

With this, Irenaeus was departing from the traditions of his antagonists and the apologists alike. Justin, in his exegesis of Luke 1:35, felt as much as many of the Gnostics that that spirit that descended on the virgin Mary was the Λόγος:

It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God, as the foresaid prophet Moses declared; and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive, not by intercourse, but by power.<sup>15</sup>

This was the simple extrapolation of the assumption that autonomy is integral to divinity, for Justin does not conceive of the Son, being God, as being in need of the Spirit’s equipping. Thus, when asked by Trypho why, if Christ be God, he should be in need of the empowering of the Spirit, Justin replied:

<sup>12</sup> *ubi autem Spiritus Patris, ibi Homo Vivens*, AH 5.9.3

<sup>13</sup> AH 3.20.2

<sup>14</sup> AH 3.22.3

<sup>15</sup> *I Ap.*, 33; cf. AH 1.4.5, 1.7.2, 1.15.3, 1.30.14f.



truly there does seem to be a difficulty; but.... Scripture says that these enumerated powers of the Spirit have come on Him, not because He stood in need of them, but because they would rest in Him, i.e., would find their accomplishment in Him, so that there would be no more prophets in your nation after the ancient custom.<sup>16</sup>

There can be some difficulty in determining Irenaeus' understanding of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, as seen in his comments on Lam 4:20 (πνεῦμα προσώπου ἡμῶν χριστὸς κυρίου συνελήμφθη ἐν ταῖς διαφθοραῖς αὐτῶν οὐ εἶπαμεν ἐν τῇ σκιᾷ αὐτοῦ ζησόμεθα ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν):

being Spirit of God, Christ was to become a suffering man the Scripture declares; and is, as it were, amazed and astonished at His sufferings, that in such manner He was to endure sufferings, under whose shadow we said that we should live. And by shadow he means His body. For just as a shadow is made by a body, so also Christ's body was made by His Spirit. But, further, the humiliation and contemptibility of His body he indicates by the shadow. For, as the shadow of bodies standing upright is upon the ground and is trodden upon, so also the body of Christ fell upon the ground by His sufferings and was trodden on indeed. And he named Christ's body a shadow, because the Spirit overshadowed it, as it were, with glory and covered it.<sup>17</sup>

However, whilst referring to Christ as 'spirit' here, Irenaeus was quite capable of distinguishing between the two 'hands' of God, Word and Wisdom, the Son as 'spirit' from the Spirit.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it is clear that Irenaeus objects to the dividing of Christ that a descent of 'Christ' on 'Jesus' would involve, insisting instead that 'it was neither Christ nor the Saviour, but the Holy Spirit, who did descend upon Jesus.'<sup>19</sup>

Yet Harnack felt that in dealing with the same questions as Justin (why God would need anointing by the Spirit), 'Irenaeus no doubt felt these difficulties. He

<sup>16</sup> *Dial.* 87; cf. Swete, H. B., *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp 265-7 for a study in how the relationship between the Son and the Spirit develops in the later Christological dispute between Antioch and Alexandria.

<sup>17</sup> *Dem.* 71; cf. *AH* 4.20.1; 4.pref.4; 5.6.1; 5.28.4

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *AH* 3.6.1-2; *Frag.* 52

<sup>19</sup> *AH* 3.17.title; cf. 'Christ did not at that time descend upon Jesus, neither was Christ one and Jesus another: but the Word of God—who is the Saviour of all, and the ruler of heaven and earth, who is Jesus, as I have already pointed out, who did also take upon Him flesh, and was anointed by the Spirit from the Father—was made Jesus Christ' (*AH* 3.9.3).

avoided them (III.9.3) by referring the bestowal of the Spirit at baptism merely to the *man* Jesus, and thus gave his own approval to that separation which appeared to him so reprehensible in the Gnostics.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly Irenaeus sees a vital role for the Spirit in the generating and equipping of the Son in the incarnation. The incarnate Son was, after all, ὁ Χριστός, 'sown from God by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary'.<sup>21</sup> Yet even the passage Harnack chooses as his illustration (AH 3.9.3) is far from clear in making his point. In it, Irenaeus writes: 'Christ did not at that time descend upon Jesus, neither was Christ one and Jesus another: but *the Word of God*... was anointed by the Spirit from the Father.' It was through a misapprehension of the bishop's concept of 'man' that Harnack failed to understand that that anointing by the Spirit, in contrast to Justin's conception, Irenaeus sees as equally true of the pre-incarnate λόγος ἄσαρκος. Thus, commenting on Psalm 45:6f., he sees 'the Son, as being God, receives from the Father, that is, from God, the throne of the everlasting kingdom, and the oil of anointing above His fellows. The oil of anointing is the Spirit, wherewith He has been anointed'.<sup>22</sup> From creation onwards, it could be seen that the Λόγος acts in the power of 'the Spirit of the Saviour', the Son in 'the Spirit of adoption', that same Spirit by whom he visited the patriarchs.<sup>23</sup> Irenaeus did not see Jesus' assumed impersonal flesh being directly animated, as if personally, by the Spirit. It was the person of the man, equipped as the Word of God, that was anointed. The alternative would have been what for Irenaeus would be an unacceptable notion, that the nature the Λόγος took to himself in the incarnation was, by the Spirit, an αὐτοκίνητον, a self-moving principle. Yet such αὐτοκίνησις would always, for Irenaeus, be too redolent of departures from the anchor of the οἰκονομία θεοῦ: one Lord Jesus Christ.

Given his conviction that it is the presence of the Spirit that determines whether blood, the vehicle of the soul, is 'rational' (λογικός), it seems most likely that he understood the very concept of Man as Λόγος to involve empowerment by the Spirit.

The flesh, therefore, when destitute of the Spirit of God, is dead, not having life, and cannot possess the kingdom of God: [it is] irrational blood, like water poured out upon the ground. And therefore he says, "As is the earthy, such are

<sup>20</sup> Harnack A., *The History of Dogma* trans. N. Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1897), Vol. II, 285

<sup>21</sup> *Dem.* 40; cf. AH 3.12.7

<sup>22</sup> *Dem.* 47; cf. AH 3.18.3

<sup>23</sup> AH 2.28.7; 4.1.1; cf. 1.22.1; 2.28.2; 4.36.8

they that are earthy.” But where the Spirit of the Father is, there is Living Man, the rational blood preserved by God for avenging, the flesh possessed by the Spirit, forgetful indeed of what belongs to it, and adopting the quality of the Spirit, being made conformable to the Word of God.<sup>24</sup>

Thus to be ὁ Λόγος, it seems, is, *per definitionem*, to be ὁ Χριστός. The Λόγος is, as it were, the ψυχὴ θεοῦ, the primal and archetypical recipient of the Spirit. The questions of how and why this One who is eternally Jesus (human) Christ (anointed) can then take flesh and be baptised by the hovering creator Spirit will occupy us next, and must continue to occupy us in the next chapter. For the moment, though, this may seem to – and indeed does – complicate the question of Irenaeus’ similarity to Apollinarius: would the Λόγος then need to take a *human* ψυχὴ to himself upon incarnation? Jesus being innately Spirit-filled, would the soul that in men receives the Spirit be superfluous? It is worth noting, however, that even though he sees the Λόγος as ἄνθρωπος πνευματικόν, and despite resemblance to Apollinarius in holding that προὔπάρχει ὁ ἄνθρωπος Χριστός, it seems he does not ultimately fall into Apollinarius’ error of having the Λόγος assume a truncated σάρξ.<sup>25</sup> As recipient of the Spirit, he still had a human ψυχὴ, even if he was not merely ψυχικόν: ‘the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh’.<sup>26</sup> That he had a human ψυχὴ is, in fact, of fundamental significance for the next section’s examination of Irenaeus’ soteriology. For, had Jesus’ assumed flesh been incapable of receiving that life-giving Spirit with which he, as the Christ, was eternally anointed, there would be no resurrection and no hope for Adam’s infantile and rebellious race.

<sup>24</sup> *Igitur caro sine Spiritu Dei mortua est non habens vitam, regnum Dei possidere non potest: sanguis irrationalis, velut aqua effuse in terram. Et propter hoc ait: Qualis terrenus, tales terreni. Ubi autem Spiritus Patris, ibi homo vivens, sanguis rationalis ad ultionem a Deo custoditus, caro a Spiritu possessa oblita quidem sui, qualitatem autem Spiritus assumens, conformis facta Verbo Dei.* AH 5.9.3; cf. 4.4.3.

<sup>25</sup> Contra Osborn, E., *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 111; Duncker, L., *Des heiligen Irenäus Christologie im Zusammenhange mit dessen theologischer und anthropologischer Grundlehre* (Göttingen: 1843), 206.

<sup>26</sup> AH 5.1.1; cf. 5.6.1; Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians*, 49; Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 6



### Spirit and Flesh

The matter of Irenaeus' likeness to Apollinarius leads us to a similar query, of whether Irenaeus in fact sailed his Christology too close to the rocks of docetism, failing to skirt the Gnostic doctrine that 'Christ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube'.<sup>27</sup> Had he in fact left an Abyss between Man and men? This might indeed have been the case were it not for the full development of his pneumatology: where the Gnostics 'set the Spirit aside altogether',<sup>28</sup> Irenaeus sought to reverse the Gnostic Babel with a Pentecost that reunites what was scattered through weakness and sin. In contrast to the fissiparous Orphic creed of σῶμα-σῆμα – the body as a tomb<sup>29</sup> – he did not see flesh and spirit as incompatible. Rather, the two were to become one in the incarnation. Flesh would be redeemed, but only by that Spirit of life with which the archetype of humanity, the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ, is eternally endowed.<sup>30</sup> Adam would never escape the 'hands' of God that had formed him since, having been established as the τύπος of the Son, he would receive life through his Spirit, just as in creation the Father had been 'establishing all things by His Word, and binding them together by His Wisdom'.<sup>31</sup> So the economy would blossom, faithful to its inception, with the Spirit bringing life and maturity to what had been established in reference to and by the Word. Where the Word is the soil and substance, the ὑπόστασις of humanity, the Spirit is that water that brings life to the intrinsically needy and thirsty flesh of ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν.

And those of them who declare... "I will make a way in the desert, and riven in a dry land, to give drink to my chosen people, my people whom I have acquired, that they may show forth my praise," plainly announced that liberty which distinguishes the new covenant, and the new wine which is put into new bottles, the faith which is in Christ, by which He has proclaimed the way of

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<sup>27</sup> AH 1.7.2; 3.11.3; cf. 4.2.4

<sup>28</sup> AH 2.17.4

<sup>29</sup> One characteristic that could be said to unite the disparate Gnostic sects was the wholehearted enthusiasm with which they adopted, in particular, the vivid Platonic images used to describe the soul's unnatural union with the body: the soul, for instance, could aptly be described as being trapped in its body like an oyster in its shell, or tortuously bound to its body just as the Tyrrhenian pirates had bound their captives to corpses (cf. AH 1.25.4).

<sup>30</sup> AH 5.2.2; cf. 5.12.1; 5.14.1; Harnack, II, 238

<sup>31</sup> AH 3.24.2; cf. 4.pref.4; cf. 4.20.1; 4.31.2; 5.1.3; 5.5.1; 5.6.1; 5.28.3



righteousness sprung up in the desert, and the streams of the Holy Spirit in a dry land, to give water to the elect people of God, whom He has acquired.<sup>32</sup>

To take one step back, it is necessary to see what is perhaps an unsurprising assertion, coming from Irenaeus. That is, ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν is not only needy, but imperfect without the infusion of this πνεῦμα that anointed the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ.<sup>33</sup> The *plasma*, whilst formed κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϋς, was imbued only with typical breath, and so lacked that very likeness to God that helps to make up the fundamental constitution of the *plasma*. Amongst others, A. A. Hoekema has contested this, arguing that the Spirit was in fact possessed by Adam in his primitive state; it was due to his fall, rather than to his role as τύπος, that he was deprived of the Spiritual likeness.<sup>34</sup> However, the passage in *Adversus Haereses* that he turns to as evidence, where Adam soliloquises over losing 'that robe of sanctity which I had from the Spirit', refers not to any loss of the Spirit or likeness, but refers explicitly to the loss of his 'natural disposition and child-like mind'.<sup>35</sup> It is true that Adam lost his innocence in the fall, but later restorationist salvation histories should not be retrospectively injected into the bishop's economy, where Adam remains a type imbued solely with typical breath. The idea of a special but secondary gift of a 'golden bridle' of righteousness given to Adam over and above his creation to secure him in his integrity may borrow Irenaeian terminology and yet remain one belonging to an entirely different millennium and devoid of Irenaeus' Christocentric teleology.<sup>36</sup> What, then, of the oft-cited passage

<sup>32</sup> AH 3.17.2; cf. 3.17.3; 4.14.2; 4.33.14; 4.36.4; 4.39.2; 5.2.3; 5.18.2

<sup>33</sup> AH 5.6.1

<sup>34</sup> Hoekema, A. A., *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 33ff.

<sup>35</sup> AH 3.23.5. That this is the case can be seen in the fact of the broader second century Church's agreement with Irenaeus. So, complementary to him, Clement of Alexandria spoke of Adam in his primitive state as being adapted for the reception of virtue, but not as created possessing it. Whilst innocent, then, he had no righteousness (a righteousness corresponding to the likeness) to lose (*Stromata*, 6.11-12). Furthermore, Clement built this conception upon what he confesses to be a borrowed distinction between man's original constitution 'in the image' and his later perfection 'according to the likeness' (*Stromata*, 2.22).

<sup>36</sup> The difficulty with interpretation here is that Irenaeus does not fit neatly into the well worn grooves defined by the arguments between the Reformers and Roman Catholicism. Rome (or, more specifically, Roman Catholicism as influenced by Scotism, cf. Cross, R., *Duns Scotus* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1999), 96-100; also Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, prima secundæ, ix., sect. 2, art. 1) taught that Adam was created perfect even before he was endowed with original righteousness like a robe or ornament. Thus Adam's original righteousness (*iustitia originalis*) and state of integrity (*status integritatis*) were divine gifts not to be confused with the essential image (*imago essentialis*). The offence for the Reformed churches was that, thereby, sin could be described as simply the lack of original righteousness, and not the loss of the image itself, which is endemic to humanity. They, in contrast, maintained that original righteousness is an essential part of the human nature, Adam having been created in the possession of it as the direct manifestation of his life. Thus sin could be seen as more than the loss of original righteousness, as the corruption of human nature itself. This is a question to which we must needs return below.

*quod perdideramus in Adam, id est, secundum imaginem et similitudinem esse Dei, hoc in Christo Jesu reciperemus (AH 3.18.1)?* If Irenaeus is not to be found guilty of the sort of inconsistency Friedrich Loofs charged him with, this seems to refer, not to the loss of an originally possessed likeness, but to Adam's squandering of his destiny in disobedience, a destiny that Christ restores to humanity in the incarnation. The significance of this can be seen in the significance Irenaeus attributed to the concept of ὁμοίωσις, which he interpreted to be the spiritually imparted property of Wisdom that Adam simply did not have. To be more precise, Irenaeus believed the Spirit to be the bringer of ὁμοίωσις since the Spirit is the ὁμοίωσις of God: 'His [the Father's] Offspring and His Similitude do minister to Him in every respect; that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and Wisdom.'<sup>37</sup> Such is the reality of the distinction that Irenaeus in fact made between εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις. Man, as he is created, is the possessor of neither; nor is it strictly correct even to say that the Son is both the image and the likeness together; it is most accurate to say that, for Irenaeus, Jesus *is* the image, and as the Christ *bears* the likeness by the Spirit – so it is that the Son, as Jesus Christ, can bring to the created type both the image and the likeness that are his destiny.

At this juncture it is necessary to pause for a moment in order to examine Emil Brunner's seminal critique of this aspect of Irenaeus' anthropology. Given the weight of the criticism, and the persistency with which similar or derivative arguments can be found in the secondary literature, it is worth devoting some time to. Brunner's admiration for Irenaeus has already been noted. In his *Man in Revolt* he could write that Irenaeus was 'the first great genuine theologian, and possibly the most Scriptural of all the theologians of the early Church. We might almost call him the 'Fundamentalist' among the early Fathers.' And yet Brunner immediately felt impelled to go on to launch the most blistering attack on Irenaeus since that of Friedrich Loofs:

In spite of this, however, even in his thinking the spirit of Greek rationalism was at work, and precisely in his doctrine of the *imago-similitudo*.... His anthropology is Gnosticism purified by Scripture, with a strong element of general Greek philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> AH 4.7.4 – *ministrat enim ei ad omnia sua Progenies et Figuratio sua, id est, filius et spiritus sanctus, verbum et sapientia. Figuratio sua* is possibly a translation of ἡ μορφωσις or εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ, where αὐτοῦ may refer to the Son, as Harvey understands it (Harvey, II, 164, n.8). However, it seems most natural to read αὐτοῦ as referring to the Father, as with *sua Progenies*.

<sup>38</sup> Brunner, E., *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Wyon, O. (London: Lutterworth, 1939), 504. For a brief, but entirely antithetical appraisal, see Farrow, D., *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the*

It is certainly the case that the terminology of εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις is strewn throughout Hellenic thought. Usually, εἰκών would refer to man's essential rational principle, ὁμοίωσις being that which could be acquired through the perfection of this reason. The image is the foundation and the likeness is the goal. The terms were then imported into Gnosticism where they acquired the flavour of the entire system such that they could be sharply differentiated in order to divide the Gnostic elite from the rabble of ontologically pedestrian humanity. That is to say, whilst some men had only the image, others had what could only be called the fortune (given the impotence of all beings before the sovereignty of ontology) to enjoy the likeness as well – so higher and lower men could be distinguished.<sup>39</sup>

Brunner maintained that the very Valentinianism that Irenaeus was seeking to eradicate had actually contaminated his anthropology at this point. Given that Irenaeus saw God as supreme Reason, Brunner argued that Irenaeus interpreted the *imago Dei* to be man's natural endowment of reason. However, scriptural 'fundamentalist' that Irenaeus was, he knew this rationalism to be essentially alien to Christianity, and thus he attempted (in violation of the meaning of Genesis 1:26) to paste over the difficulty with a Christian veneer – the *similitudo*. Brunner seemed to be confused as to whether this *similitudo* constituted an 'original relation to God which may be lost' or 'was rather a promise for the future than a present reality' for man in the primitive state. Whichever it be, Brunner sees that the case is clear: *imago* is the essential *humanum*, *similitudo* a *donum superadditum*. Thus Irenaeus had yielded to the Gnostic partitioning of man by importing a distinction between a 'nature' and a 'super-nature'. The shock-waves down through Church history, he went on, were disastrous, for this became the basis for the traditional dualism of Christian anthropology, the whole nature-grace dichotomy, indeed, of Semi-Pelagianism. This was due, in large part, to Irenaeus' dualism being intensified by medieval Scholasticism through its synthesis with Aristotelianism into a universal system of nature and super-nature. Thus, on this basis of a distinction between man's essential *humanum* as rational *imago* and the grace of the *similitudo*, Roman Catholicism could ascribe to unredeemed man complete freedom of the will by virtue of his innate rationality, his inalienable *humanum*. It was the foothold for natural theology in making reason inviolable as it was equated with the

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*Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 59

<sup>39</sup> AH 1.5.5; 5.6.1



essential image. Not that the Reformers come off much better: their reduction of what is retained in fallen man to a mere 'relic' of the image he sees as simply confused and compromised.<sup>40</sup>

Dare we attempt to pick up and clean so spit-stained a mantle? It seems that we must, if we are to understand the bishop himself, and not merely lament trends within medieval Scholasticism. First, in response to the incessantly repeated critique of Irenaeus' doctrine of the *imago-similitudo*, that it fails to recognise in the Genesis text what is normally taken to be a simple instance of Hebrew parallelism, it has to be said to be a case of collective theological tunnel vision. Irenaeus most frequently refers to εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις as a hendiadys.<sup>41</sup> Wingren suggests that commentators have only leaped to the rare instances of distinction, not because the scholastic tradition built on Irenaeus' foundations, but because of the superficial similarity between the two.<sup>42</sup> When he does distinguish them it is, in part at least, to use a weapon of the Philistines against the hand that made it. Thus, where Gnostics could imagine *imago* and *similitudo* signifying body and spirit respectively, Irenaeus could respond that if we let only the body be saved, then one is left with a naked *imago* without its necessary and corresponding *similitudo*; and on the other hand, if we let only the spirit be saved, then one is left with a naked *similitudo* without its necessary and corresponding *imago*.<sup>43</sup> In neither case can we be speaking of the whole and complete man. Even when considered exegetically, to be fair we must note that in the Septuagint, Genesis 5:3, the verse usually turned to as evidence of the interchangeability of εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις, in that it reverses the order of Genesis 1:26, bears no mention of ὁμοίωσις, but states ἐγέννησεν κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ.

Even then, Irenaeus' admirers are usually content to assert that, even if he was clear of the fault (given that his intent was simply to demonstrate that man as created was not what he finally would be, but that his destiny was to advance into glorious maturity and divine fellowship), his distinction between image and likeness was, if truth be told, the foundation for so many of those ills that Brunner enumerated. Yet such a concession prescinds the factor that most supremely makes Brunner's charge invalid, which is the broader context of Irenaeus' anthropology as we have seen it. Given this, it is possible to see that, for Irenaeus (if not for the Scholastics), the Spirit is

<sup>40</sup> Brunner, 505ff.

<sup>41</sup> Beuzart, P., *Essai sur la Théologie d'Irénée* (Le Puy: 1908), 69-73

<sup>42</sup> Wingren, G., *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 157

<sup>43</sup> AH 5.6.1



not the supernatural *donum superadditum* to the basic *humanum*, for Adam was not the basic *humanum*. Adam was only ever κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκότος, and never the εἰκὼν, or the possessor of the εἰκὼν, in himself. He had 'not as yet been made a man.'<sup>44</sup> Thus the basic *humanum* could be as little found in Adam as the ὁμοίωσις. This was not to denigrate Adam; put negatively, it was to deny his independence as the possessor of a basic *humanum* outside of and apart from Jesus Christ; put positively, it was to affirm his creatureliness, and so enforce his utter dependence, even in his very existence, upon Jesus Christ, his archetype and goal. Jesus Christ, as himself the εἰκὼν, and being the Christ, the bearer of the ὁμοίωσις, is the bringer of both to the needy creature. Semi-Pelagianism must, of necessity, find another mentor.

To return to the main argument; whilst remaining within the one economy, we must progress from creation to redemption, and so look first at God's coming to man, and then at man's corresponding coming to God. Whilst having introduced the theme much earlier in the work, Book Five of *Adversus Haereses* (the book most concerned with the role of the Spirit and the eschatological hope of man) opens with the argument that for the redemption of that needy and immature flesh, the Εἰκὼν took his own craftsmanship to himself. Through this 'union and communion' of the archetype and his type, the Spirit with which he, the Λόγος, was endowed, could be shared with the *plasma*.<sup>45</sup> Incarnation, then, could never helpfully be understood as ἐνανθρωπήσις (becoming generically man-like), but only as a σάρκωσις (correctly translated *incarnatio*; that is, becoming specifically Adamic, in the flesh) for the sake of the 'blending and communion of God and man... in order that man, having embraced the Spirit of God, might pass into the glory of the Father.'<sup>46</sup> This σάρκωσις involved not only the revelation of the Εἰκὼν in the true man, but the impartation of the Spirit, the ὁμοίωσις of God, to the imperfect *plasma* of Adam.<sup>47</sup> Thus it brought 'all possible novelty' in bringing the flesh of Adam to its τέλος by uniting it to the 'the ladder of ascent to God' – the Spirit.<sup>48</sup> With Irenaeus being so explicit as to this novelty of the Spirit (a novelty with regard to the flesh as opposed to a chronological novelty that would disbar the faithful justified of the Old Testament), it seems impossible to concur with Robert Jenson's analysis of Irenaeus' soteriology as essentially restorationist, as Wilhelm Bousset had presented it. Jenson explains:

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<sup>44</sup> AH 4.39.2

<sup>45</sup> AH 5.1.1; cf. 5.6.1; *Dem.* 41

<sup>46</sup> AH 4.20.4

<sup>47</sup> AH 5.16.2; cf. 3.17.3; 5.1.3; 5.36.3; *Dem.* 97

<sup>48</sup> AH 4.34.1; 3.24.1; 5.20.2; cf. 3.17.1; 3.20.2; 3.22.1; 4.14.2; 4.20.4; 4.33; 5.1.3.

When Irenaeus wrote, “Out of the greatness of his love he was made what we are, that he might bring us to be what he is”... [he] did not distinguish qualitatively between what believers are becoming in this age and what they will be in the Eschaton, or indeed between what humanity is created to be and what it will then be.<sup>49</sup>

Yet Irenaeus paints a markedly different picture: where the created *plasma* had been created unripe and needy, now the Spirit of adoption could produce visible fruit – the rendering of immature flesh mature.<sup>50</sup> Left apart, the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Infused with the life-giving Spirit, that flesh would shrug off its sloth with the eagerness for which it was modelled.<sup>51</sup> This is the *τέλος* of the *plasma*.

For this reason does the apostle declare, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” terming those persons “perfect” who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak.<sup>52</sup>

So it can be seen that both the image and the likeness of God were brought to Adam such that in both creation and redemption, ‘God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modelled after, His own Son.’<sup>53</sup>

To the chagrin of those, such as Harnack, whose taste is for a purely ethical salvation with no ontological payload, he persistently returns to the Eucharist as itself both effective and illustrative of this, perhaps unnervingly ‘physical’, redemption. He begins at the Last Supper, where Jesus ‘administered food to them [the disciples] in a recumbent posture, indicating that those who were lying in the earth were they to whom He came to impart life.’<sup>54</sup> Hence, as with the posture of the disciples, the Eucharist serves as proof of the salvation of the flesh. There can be seen the created and,

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<sup>49</sup> Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 322-3; cf. Bousset, W., *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* trans. Steely, J. E. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 438.

<sup>50</sup> AH 5.12.4

<sup>51</sup> AH 5.9.2; cf. Matt. 26:41

<sup>52</sup> AH 5.6.1; cf. 1 Cor. 2:6

<sup>53</sup> AH 5.6.1

<sup>54</sup> AH 4.22.1. Perhaps it needs to be said that whilst Irenaeus’ exegesis (like Patristic exegesis in general) may appear wholly alien to today’s reader, it does not follow that this particular methodology of his negates the conclusions he reaches. It is, after all, his anthropological conclusions and not his exegetical ability that we are seeking to determine and assess here.

importantly, manhandled elements receiving the Word of God for the sake of the flesh of men. In just the same way, he argues, our flesh received the Word of God in the incarnation, a reception which is appreciated through the nourishment of the Eucharist.<sup>55</sup> This rationale is founded upon the Eucharist containing within itself both fleshly and spiritual realities, the communion of which, for Irenaeus, is the essence of redemption. At the ἐπίκλησις, a 'fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit' is effected such that what was 'common bread' now consists of two realities, earthly and heavenly.<sup>56</sup> In just the same way, our bodies, receiving the Eucharist, receive the Spiritual Word and so can enjoy the hope of resurrection.<sup>57</sup> So the body of Christ is 're-membered'. The Eucharist holding so fundamental and illuminative a significance in his understanding of redemption, Irenaeus simply cannot see how Gnostics can take the material elements with any degree of consistency.<sup>58</sup>

It should by no means be imagined that a complete transformation of substance is envisaged here, either in ἐπίκλησις or redemption. It is not the case that bread is no longer bread, or flesh no longer flesh, but there exists a 'fellowship and union' of two realities. For this redemption, the Λόγος did not pass through Mary as water through a tube, but required an umbilical cord of continuity with the race of Adam, his assumed 'righteous flesh' reconciling not a wholly new race of men taken afresh from the dust, but the very flesh of Adam.<sup>59</sup> For this to be, the 'righteousness' (the lack of the taint of sin in the flesh assumed) was imperative if the substance assumed were not to be sub-human. For,

according to Irenaeus there is not a single part of humanity lacking in Him. If there were, it would mean that the sinless One had not wholly entered the sphere from which sin was to be expelled. Sin is never in itself anything

<sup>55</sup> *AH* 5.2.3; cf. 4.18.5

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Justin, *I Ap.* 66. More can be seen here on the vexed question of Irenaeus' understanding (and that of his contemporaries) of the relationship between the Word as spirit and the Spirit with which the Word is anointed. Thus in *AH* 5.2.3 Irenaeus can sound much as if he is imagining a Λόγος ἐπίκλησις: 'When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, which [flesh] is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of Him?'

<sup>57</sup> *AH* 4.18.5, Προσφέρομεν δὲ αὐτῷ τὰ ἴδια, ἐμμελῶς κοινωνίαν καὶ ἔνωσιν ἀπαγγέλλοντες [καὶ ὁμολογοῦντες] σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος [ἐγερσιν]. 'Ὡς γὰρ ἀπὸ γῆς ἄρτος προσλαμβανόμενος τὴν ἑκκλησίαν [sic. i. ἐπίκλησιν] τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐκέτι κοινὸς ἄρτος ἐστίν, ἀλλ' εὐχαριστία, ἐκ δύο πραγμάτων συνεστηκεῖα, ἐπιγείου τε καὶ οὐρανίου· οὕτως καὶ τὰ σώματα ἡμῶν μεταλαμβάνοντα τῆς εὐχαριστίας, μηκέτι εἶναι φθαρτὰ, τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς εἰς αἰῶνα ἀναστάσεως ἔχοντα. Cf. 5.2.3

<sup>58</sup> *AH* 4.18.4; cf. 1.28.1

<sup>59</sup> *AH* 5.14.2; cf. 3.21.10; 5.12.3-4



human, but on the contrary is the Devil's destruction of man as God made him. It is no limitation of Christ's humanity that He has no sin, but on the contrary His very freedom from sin qualifies Him for achieving the thing which is truly human.<sup>60</sup>

In this, Irenaeus has refused to succumb to the dispensational butchering of the one οἰκονομία θεοῦ: here there is no abandonment of the project of creation, nor a redemption *ex nihilo*, but *ex Maria*; καινός, not νέος. There, in the taking of *plasma* to himself in the incarnation, was the affirmation and εὐχαριστία κατ' ἐξοχήν for the very existence of flesh, the cosmos, and the man for whom it was formed.<sup>61</sup>

This being the case, it would seem extraordinary that the process of redemption might then somehow involve the supplanting of flesh by spirit as opposed to the infusing of flesh with spirit. Irenaeus is eager to be most explicit on this point. Those whom the apostle Paul terms οἱ πνευματικοί, are so called

because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away, and because they have become purely spiritual. For if any one take away the substance of flesh, that is, of the *plasma*, and understand that which is purely spiritual, such then would not be a spiritual man but would be the spirit of a man, or the Spirit of God. But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to *plasma*, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God.<sup>62</sup>

Any metamorphosis implying a displacement of the created *plasma* would lie closer to the Gnostic schema in which the redemption of flesh was impossible, it having to be removed as that which smothered the true self of the spirit. In defence of this impossibility, those who followed Valentinus found 1 Cor. 15:50 in particular to be 'decisive evidence against the Church's claim of bodily resurrection': σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομῆσαι οὐ δύναται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ. 'This is [the passage] which is adduced by all the heretics in support of their folly, with

<sup>60</sup> Wingren, 86-7, cf. 102-3.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. AH 4.18.4

<sup>62</sup> AH 5.6.1; cf. 5.8.2. Whilst it is not of immediate concern for our purposes here, in this passage it can be seen that Irenaeus believed in a created spirit as well as the divine Spirit, a spirit that in no sense diminished the need for the created *plasma* to be infused with vivifying Spirit (cf. Behr, 103).



an attempt to annoy us, and to point out that the handiwork of God is not saved.<sup>63</sup> However, having seen the resurrected Jesus' words of comfort to the disciples, πνεῦμα σάρκα καὶ ὅστέα οὐκ ἔχει καθὼς ἐμὲ θεωρεῖτε ἔχοντα (Luke 24:39), Irenaeus retorted

If, however, we must speak strictly, the flesh *does not inherit, but is inherited*; as also the Lord declares, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth by inheritance;" as if in the kingdom, the earth, from whence exists the substance of our flesh, is to be possessed by inheritance.<sup>64</sup>

Contingent being, such as flesh, can never justify itself. It is, however, as created, a fit inheritance for the Son to share with his Bride. The process of being fitted for that inheritance is termed by Irenaeus 'spiritualisation'.

'Spiritualisation', for Irenaeus, does not mean transubstantiation. Flesh is the very *plasma* of the project of man, the first aspect of man created and his hope of resurrection (that is, a fleshly, though perfected, future due to God's faithfulness to his purposes in creation). However, left to itself it could not achieve the goal for which it was formed. For this, it must become πνευματικός, like the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Yet, for Irenaeus, to be πνευματικός is not to be less tangible, but to be free from the corruption, mortality, and darkness that affects it. Whereas now we see as through a glass darkly, the Spirit so affects the flesh as to make it luciform, an ὄργανον of light conformable to the Word of God.<sup>65</sup> In fact, for flesh to be made πνευματικός is the very antithesis of its being traduced. Instead, Irenaeus speaks of the augmentation and strengthening of the flesh that, far from being laid aside as the clothing of youth, is that very thing which is the object of maturation. To be a spiritual man or a spiritual body is not to be less human or less bodily, but to be more truly and completely so, for the Spirit comes not to rob but to redeem man as he is found in the flesh from all that impoverishes and undermines his being. Thus, for the present, 'we do now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection, and preparing us for incorruption, being little by

<sup>63</sup> AH 5.9.1; cf. 5.13.2; Pagels, E. H., *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 85. Peter Brown explains this non-resurrection redemption as follows: 'Christ had breathed on His disciples, as a man breathes on the dying embers of a fire. He had scattered from their spirits the loose ash of confusion, causing the whole self to glow throughout with a single radiance.' (Brown, P., *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 110; cf. Clement, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 3.2).

<sup>64</sup> AH 5.9.4; cf. 5.2.3; Lk. 24:39

<sup>65</sup> AH 5.9.3; cf. 5.5.1; 5.14.3-4.

little accustomed to receive and bear God'<sup>66</sup> The weakness of flesh is unable immediately and fully to sustain the weight of the divinity that Adam had desired for himself. For this reason (and not simply because of sin), flesh and Spirit will struggle within those who are being spiritualised now until mortality is entirely swallowed up in immortality.<sup>67</sup> Then he prefers to speak of the resurrection of σάρξ (instead of what became more traditional, to speak of the resurrection of the σῶμα), the πνεῦμα effecting this through ψυχή. For σῶμα, as Aldous Huxley punned in so naming the drug the citizens of the *Brave New World* could use for out-of-body experiences, is a word open to less tangible and more detached interpretations than σάρξ.<sup>68</sup>

Having seen the essentially ontological nature of the redemption envisaged by Irenaeus, it is necessary to insert a brief caveat regarding the criticisms of Friedrich Loofs and Adolph von Harnack.<sup>69</sup> It need only be brief, given that the ground has already been extensively covered elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> The question broached is whether Irenaeus' model of redemption is not in fact too coldly mechanical, with no space left between its cogs for the individual and his response; all ἀνάβασις at the expense of κατάβασις, with little conception of the impact of the fall. Indeed, if it is a system that has barely managed to include sin, does this effectively render the cross and human repentance redundant? As Eric Mascall put it: 'Is it, in short, Lady Day or Good Friday that is the supreme commemoration of our redemption?'<sup>71</sup>

As he argues the case for the prosecution, Harnack is forced to concede a significant point. Irenaeus is ardent and repetitive in his assertion of the necessity of faith if any of Adam's race is to be spared from Hell and included in the salvation of Christ.<sup>72</sup> Harnack is compelled to dismiss these assertions as simple inconsistency.<sup>73</sup> Yet the very dominance of the theme suggests that the weakness lies, not in Irenaeus'

<sup>66</sup> AH 5.8.1

<sup>67</sup> AH 5.8.1; cf. 3.17.1-2; 4.37-9; 5.1.2; 5.6-9; Eph. 4:24

<sup>68</sup> AH 4.13.2; *Dem.* 42. The etymology of σῶμα is illustrative of this propensity. Eduard Schweizer notes that in 'Homer, *sōma*, "body," is primarily a "corpse," that is, something different from the ego of the speaker, an object that he observes as lying outside himself.' (Schweizer, R. E., 'Body' in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 768). The modernisation of the article in the Apostles' creed 'the resurrection of the body' to 'the resurrection of the dead' only continues the flight from the fleshly specificity Irenaeus posited in his eschatology into a more nebulous, if less offensively tangible, hope.

<sup>69</sup> Loofs, F., *Leitfaden zum Studien der Dogmengeschichte* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1906); Harnack, Vol. II, 231ff.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Brunner, E., *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* trans. Wyon, O. (London: Lutterworth, 1934), 249-64; Hart, T. A., 'Irenaeus, Recapitulation and Physical Redemption' in Hart, T. A. and Thimell, D. P. (eds.) *Christ in Our Place* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989)

<sup>71</sup> Mascall, E. L., *Christ, the Christian, and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and its Consequences* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946), 68

<sup>72</sup> AH 2.29.1; 2.32.5; 3.6.2; 4.28.2; 5.10.2; 4.2.7; 4.5; *Dem.* 39; passim.

<sup>73</sup> Harnack, 244, 275

presentation of the model, but in Harnack's reading of it (or, perhaps more likely, his aversion to the necessity of ontological ballast behind any moral redemption). Furthermore, his reading is forced to ignore the pneumatology that so shapes this redemptive model.<sup>74</sup> Finally, the reconciliation that Christ effects between the Creator and his rebellious creation is entirely dependant on Christ recapitulating the work of Adam, undoing by his obedience Adam's disobedience:

in the last times the Lord has restored us into friendship through His incarnation, having become 'the Mediator between God and men', propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned, and cancelling our disobedience by His own obedience; conferring also upon us the gift of communion with, and subjection to, our Maker.<sup>75</sup>

Here is a soteriology that can only be understood ontologically (the state of redemption is characterised as ἀθανασία, ἀφθαρσία, even φάρμακον). Yet for that physicality to be necessarily mechanico-magical is simply a *non sequitur*. Why else would he have the pastoral concern to write against heresies?

Thus can be seen the goal of the Man and his image: rather than the Gnostic partitioning of Spirit, soul and flesh, here is a growing relationship, typically depicted in that intimacy between the children in Eden, 'kissing and embracing each other in purity.'<sup>76</sup> And so the importance of ἄνθρωπος ἀληθής being more particularly ἀνὴρ ἀληθής can be seen as Jesus Christ comes to his *plasma* to become one with it.<sup>77</sup> Through the revelation of Man – the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ – in the incarnation, a perichoretic relationship between the creator and his creation was effected. Where it had been not good for man, the glory of God, to be alone, his bride, the glory of man, had been immature, unfulfilled, even anhypostatic. Yet now the true Man had been united to his bride, and the two had become one flesh. In this marriage, vivifying Spirit had been brought by the Λόγος – through ψυχή – to be one with flesh. That Spirit had, in turn, brought ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν to bear the fruit of life. Now, in the garden of the

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<sup>74</sup> AH 3.17.1-2; 5.1.1; 5.9.2

<sup>75</sup> AH 5.17.1

<sup>76</sup> Dem. 14

<sup>77</sup> It is probably this that stands behind Caecilius' otherwise extraordinary stated slur against the Christians in Minucius Felix's dialogue *Octavian*, that 'Some say that they [the Christians] worship the *virilia* of their pontiff and priest, and adore the nature, as it were, of their common parent.' (Minucius Felix, *Octavian*, 9).



Church, humanity would no longer be disobedient to the Voice of God in her midst, suffused as she was, no longer by breath, but by the Spirit of that Bridegroom.<sup>78</sup>

This is the reason for His wishing the temple (i.e., the flesh) to be clean, that the Spirit of God may take delight therein, as a bridegroom with a bride. As, therefore, the bride cannot [be said] to wed, but to be wedded, when the bridegroom comes and takes her, so also the flesh cannot by itself possess the kingdom of God by inheritance; but it can be taken for an inheritance into the kingdom of God.<sup>79</sup>

At this juncture it is worth pausing to note the vital contrast between Irenaeus and his opponents on this point. The bishop was offering what he believed to be gospel in opposition to both Valentinus' vision of a celestial redemption, entailing the marriage of Sophia and Christ (a myth that also manifests itself as the marriage of Ἄνθρωπος with the first woman, the Spirit<sup>80</sup>), and the burgeoning movement of ascetic denunciation of any sexual intercourse (as seen in Tatian's Encratites<sup>81</sup>). Gnostic practice was always prone to lurch between two opposite extremes. On the one hand, the Gnostic divorce of God from the world had a comforting Epicurean effect. Liberated from the intrusive presence of deity, life was secured for the sort of pleasure displayed in the legendary licentiousness of Simon Magus. On the other hand, disdain for the material had the obvious but opposite effect of producing an asceticism that would rather turn wine into water, for where the Gnostics may have been of the world, they had no desire to be in it. Irenaeus, in effect, retorted 'a plague o' both your houses!'. The form of this asceticism was intimately connected with the Gnostic soteriology which envisaged, not a συμφωνία between sexes, but the 'healing' of otherness. Redemption on this model could be summarised under the general expression ἀπανδρόομαι: femininity existed as a shadow of the excrescence that was creation, a sorry state of otherness that could not be celebrated but only healed by the

<sup>78</sup> AH 5.20.2. Here, Irenaeus drew his identification of the Church with paradise from the Song of Songs 4:12 ('You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain'). Jean Delumeau has traced the influence of this identification on the cloister, especially the Cistercian cloisters. Monasteries required gardens, especially in order to cultivate medicinal plants, and the preferred form was the square, whose four sides, built around a symbolic central well, represented the four rivers of paradise. So the cloister garden offered a model of the cosmos and a diagram of the paradise the monks would attain through their contemplation (Delumeau, J., *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 122).

<sup>79</sup> AH 5.9.4

<sup>80</sup> AH 1.30.1

<sup>81</sup> AH 1.28.1



female becoming male.<sup>82</sup> Jesus' saying in Matthew 22:30 that in the resurrection they are like the angels in heaven was taken to mean (as it so often still is) something stronger than that they neither marry nor are given in marriage. It was not even taken to be that there will no longer be male or female. It was that there would be no females in heaven. Thus the *Gospel of Thomas* concludes:

Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, whilst Basilides could advocate venereal licentiousness as a perversely enjoyable demonstration of the superiority of the spiritual over the physical, Apelles, Marcion, Tatian, Saturninus, the Priscillianists and others all condemned the approval of femininity and physicality that was found in wedlock, and particularly coitus. Marriage, after all, was the invention of the despicable and jealous creator, who had displayed his inferiority and worthlessness precisely in the fact that he was the creator of an other, and worse, a hylic realm.<sup>84</sup> The various Gnostic *Acts*, recounting the endeavours of the apostles, show the twelve making it amongst their chief business to proclaim a gospel of ascetic continence. This entailed turning people against marriage and especially the connubial bed, persuading spouses to cease all cohabitation save as brother and sister, and even separating couples on the wedding night.<sup>85</sup>

This was a model that clearly held appeal even well inside the bastions of so-called orthodoxy. Derrick Sherwin Bailey and Elaine Pagels are amongst those who have traced the insidious influence of the ἐγκράτεια tradition not only through patristic theology, but well beyond as it entered and informed the entire Western tradition on sexuality.<sup>86</sup> Tatian himself, who had once been a student of Justin Martyr, had extensive influence on the Church, even beyond his native Syria, especially through his

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Vogt, K., "'Becoming Male': A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor" in Børresen, K. E., *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp170-86.

<sup>83</sup> *The Gospel of Thomas*, Logion 114, in J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, third edition (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p 139, cf. Logion 22.

<sup>84</sup> *The Testimony of Truth*, 45ff., in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 454-5.

<sup>85</sup> Bailey, D. S., *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London: Longmans, 1959), 37ff.

<sup>86</sup> Bailey, *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought*; Pagels, E., *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (London: Penguin, 1990). Grace Jantzen, also, has demonstrated the tragic effect of this theology on twelfth century 'affective mysticism' in particular: 'for a man to become spiritual he must increasingly become what he is; but for a woman to become spiritual, she must become what she is not' (Jantzen, G. M., *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 130).

widely circulated *Diatessaron*.<sup>87</sup> Arthur Vööbus describes how Tatian redacted his compilation of Gospel texts to support Encratite beliefs: 'Here a gloss, there a little change in word order, or an addition, sufficed to make it unmistakably plain that the Gospel of Salvation demands a radical renunciation of the whole human life, and that the price of eternal life is virginity.'<sup>88</sup>

Innumerable more insidious examples could be cited (as well as the more straightforwardly Gnostic cases such as that of Böhme), but perhaps the most forthright modern example of a theology of redemption that amounts to ἀπανδρόομαι is that of the mystical Orthodox theologian, Nikolai Berdyaev. In *The Destiny of Man* he feels able to be quite explicit that man's sexual duality is an expression of his (the male pronoun being most emphatic) fallen nature. Basing his anthropology upon the myth of the androgyne found in Plato's *Symposium*, Berdyaev sees the original sin as the division of the whole original (and therefore future) androgynous man into two sexes. As a sexual and so divided being, man is doomed to disharmony. Sexual intercourse, then, is not only the source of life, but also death.<sup>89</sup> A remarkably similar non-theological account might be said to be found in the psychology of Sigmund Freud (whose Oedipal complex Berdyaev had appropriated to interpret symbolically and mystically). After all, the theory of the 'penis envy' of the female seems to be little more than an appropriation of the Aristotelian concept of the woman as a mutilated and anatomically deficient male.<sup>90</sup> Yet it is not only the woman in isolation that is wounded here; humanity as a whole remains mutilated by bisection. Within the Church, the proof-text frequently resorted to for this has been Ephesians 4:13, where Paul states his vision of the time καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. This was taken to mean that becoming ἀνὴρ τέλειος (in a quite specific and private sense) was to be the τέλος for all. Perversely mimicking Irenaeus' growth motif, this belief held that sexual difference is an aspect of the infirmity that is part of our protological origins, a troublesome though temporary feature of humanity that will

<sup>87</sup> Petersen, W. L., *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden, New York and London: E. J. Brill, 1994). Peterson demonstrates that the *Diatessaron* had such an extensive circulation that medieval Icelandic Christians and Chinese Manicheans alike were known to quote it.

<sup>88</sup> Vööbus, A., *Celibacy: A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951), 17

<sup>89</sup> Berdyaev, N., *The Destiny of Man* (London: G. Bles, 1948), ch.3, § 3, 'Sex: The Masculine and the Feminine'.

<sup>90</sup> Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals*, II, 3, 3 ('the female is, as it were, a mutilated male'); Freud, S., *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Lecture 33; cf. Jewett, P. K., *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 149ff..

ultimately be dealt with eschatologically as all infirmity is swallowed up. So, for all his denunciation of docetic approaches to marriage and intercourse, Clement of Alexandria: 'And is not woman translated into man, when she is become equally unfeminine, and manly, and perfect?'<sup>91</sup> Tertullian could also imagine the abolition of what he called the 'devil's gateway' of feminine otherness to be gospel, just as Christ the second Adam's celibacy (one wonders what happened to his bride, the Church) supersedes the first Adam's monogamy: 'For you too, (women as you are) have the self-same angelic nature promised as your reward, the self-same sex as men.'<sup>92</sup> Thus the ἐγκράτεια tradition could hold the state of Adam before the formation of Eve, or the supposed virginal condition of the protoplasts, to be the ideal after which to aspire, even seeing its perfection as entirely derivative of a pre-sexuality or a-sexuality. Here is the danger in misinterpreting Irenaeus as a restorationist, for Irenaeus saw the innocence of Eden as a state of immaturity, the growth from which would necessarily include marriage, the basis of the blessing of increase.<sup>93</sup> Redemption as restoration instead of maturation is a model that, of necessity, would then look much more like the Encratite ἀπανδρόομαι.

Here there was no ethic orphaned and alienated from its mother theology. The concepts 'male' and 'female' held greater significance than inter-sexual relations and the nature of resurrection or eschatological existence. 'Male' was reflective of everything ideal – spirit. 'Female' spoke of derivative imperfection – soul.<sup>94</sup> In fact, it was not so much that the female was regarded as a derivation of the male but (as in Aristotelian anthropology) as a deviation. Thus to equate redemption with the becoming male of the female entailed not a soteriology of marriage, nor even of divorce, but a soteriology in which all otherness is 'healed' (that is, removed). As Kurt Rudolph put it,

The end of the cosmos does not simply signal the separation of two basically opposing principles but results in the destruction of one of them.... The impression is given that the situation at the end of time is not merely a bare restoration of the primeval condition but that it surpasses it by the constantly

<sup>91</sup> *Stromata*, 6.12; cf. 1.3; 2.18; 7.12 passim; *Paedagogos* 1.6; 2.13; 3.10.

<sup>92</sup> *De Cultu Feminarum*, 1.2; cf. *Adversus Valentinianos*, 32; *De Monogamia*, 5, 17.

<sup>93</sup> *AH* 3.22.4; Gen. 1:27-8

<sup>94</sup> Gasparro, G. S., 'Image of God and Sexual Differentiation in the Tradition of *Enkrateia*' in Børresen, pp134-69.



repeated affirmation of the 'destruction', 'dissolution' and 'tearing-out' of the 'root of darkness'.<sup>95</sup>

In absolute contrast, Irenaeus' doctrine of the οἰκονομία θεοῦ championed what was almost certainly the greatest affirmation of 'otherness' in the early Church, declaring creation, femininity, relationship and marriage to be good in their manifestation of harmonious difference (Isaiah 54:5). Rather than allowing that our biological existence as male or female is meaningless, indifferent or misleading, Irenaeus insisted that man's external and objective form is a part of his created goodness and thus part of the project of redemption. As the Son's eternal differentiation from the Father is good, so creation, in its differentiation from God, is good; so too woman, in her created differentiation from man, is good. Man's external form as male and female thus proclaims a movement away from what is 'not good', which is being alone. Man must be united with God.

So we have arrived at a position in which we are able to examine the offspring of this marriage. The question now is whether this mixed union of God and man would produce gods or men.

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<sup>95</sup> Rudolph, K., *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* trans. Wilson, R. M. (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 202-3

### Deification and Hominisation

Few terms in biblical studies seem to have generated so much heat without corresponding light as the extraordinary Greek idiom *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* (usually translated ‘the son of man’, but literally ‘the son of the man’), derived from the Hebrew *בֶּן-אָדָם* (*בֶּן אָנָשׁ* in the Aramaic of Daniel 7). As Tom Wright’s anonymous Oxford colleague put it: ‘Son of Man? Son of Man? That way lies madness.’<sup>96</sup> Yet Jesus’ preferred term of self-reference in the gospels is also Irenaeus’ preferred term of reference for the incarnate one. Walter Wink notes

The issue of capitalization is relevant. Virtually all English versions of the Bible read ‘the Son of man,’ not only omitting the second definite article, but suggesting by capitalization that ‘Son’ is the more significant noun. If we shift the capital letter to the last term, as in ‘son of Man’ or ‘the son of the Man,’ the emphasis changes. The Gnostics tended towards this sense and pondered who this Man was, whose son was the world’s savior.<sup>97</sup>

Irenaeus was, as we have seen, necessarily bound up with this question in seeking to provide an alternative to the dichotomous Christology of the Gnostics that envisaged the son of the Man as an avatar of the Urmensch, the αἰών Ἄνθρωπος.<sup>98</sup> Yet rather than allowing any chasm to open within the one Lord Jesus Christ, Irenaeus envisaged the Man from Ezekiel’s throne-chariot himself becoming son of the Man, the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ becoming κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϛ – his own image and offspring.<sup>99</sup>

It is his understanding and use of this title, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* (used exclusively by Irenaeus as a designation of Jesus as incarnate<sup>100</sup>), that clarifies his soteriology and, in particular, the question of his perceived doctrine of θεοποίησις (an

<sup>96</sup> Wright, N. T., *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 512

<sup>97</sup> Wink, W., *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 233; cf. *AH* 1.12.4

<sup>98</sup> *AH* 1.12.4; 1.30.13. Another myth (that of the Ophites and Sethians) held that the son of Anthropos was yet another αἰών: ‘Ialdabaoth, becoming uplifted in spirit, boasted himself over all those things that were below him, and exclaimed, “I am father, and God, and above me there is no one.” But his mother, hearing him speak thus, cried out against him, “Do not lie, Ialdabaoth: for the father of all, the first Anthropos, is above thee; and so is Anthropos the son of Anthropos.”’ (*AH* 1.30.6).

<sup>99</sup> *AH* 3.12.1; 4.31.2; 4.33.2

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *AH* 3.10.2; 3.16.3, 7; 3.17.1; 3.18.3-4; 3.19.1-3; 3.20.2; 3.22.1; 4.34.2; 5.14.1; 5.17.3; 5.22.1-3; *passim*.

idiom Irenaeus never actually uses). Or, to re-phrase, if with the son of the Man we were to ask “[w]hat if you were to see the Human Being ascending to where he was before?” (John 6:62). What indeed? It is surely not an empty-handed return trip.’<sup>101</sup> If we might answer for Irenaeus, μὴ γένοιτο. Instead, ‘our Lord Jesus Christ did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.’<sup>102</sup>

Θεοποίησις has never been a Christian preserve. Indeed, Wilhelm Bousset sees the theme in *Adversus Haereses* as an entirely alien, Hellenic accretion to Irenaeus’ gospel.<sup>103</sup> In Irenaeus’ day, in many ways it was θεοποίησις or ἀποθέωσις that bound the empire together in the imperial cult. Some, such as Justin Martyr, were happy to draw a straight comparison between the deification of Caesar and that of Christians:

you produce some one who swears he has seen the burning Caesar rise to heaven from the funeral pyre.... But, as we said above, wicked devils perpetrated these things. And we have learned that those only are deified who have lived near to God in holiness and virtue.<sup>104</sup>

However, the problem with such a straight comparison was that the imperial cult had intentionally collapsed into narcissism. Any simple transposition would mean that, as G. K. Chesterton shrewdly warned: ‘That Jones shall worship the “god within him” turns out ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones.’<sup>105</sup> Such anthropotheism sits closer to the Protagoran throne of a Feuerbach or a Marx than to Irenaeus.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Wink, 249

<sup>102</sup> *AH* 5.pref; cf. 3.10.2; 2 Corinthians 8:9

<sup>103</sup> Bousset, 430ff

<sup>104</sup> *I Ap.* 21

<sup>105</sup> Chesterton, G. K., *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1908), 76. Developing the thought of Luther, Jüngel elaborates on Chesterton’s point somewhat more theologically, if less succinctly: ‘The *necessity* of denying the divinity of humanity follows from the inclination in human existence (an inclination not unknown to the unbeliever also) to ground and so to caricature himself. ‘Man is by nature unable to want God to be God. Indeed, he himself wants to be God, and does not want God to be God.’ The *possibility* of denying the divinity of humanity follows from the humanity of God as it took place in Jesus Christ. To let God be human in Jesus Christ, and for this reason not to let humanity become God: this is the anthropological task’ (Jüngel, E., *Theological Essays I* trans. and ed., J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 152, original italics, citing Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, *LIV* 31, 10)

<sup>106</sup> Moltmann pertinently describes Feuerbach’s rejection of a theistic God as just such a transference of power from God to man: ‘God is man come to himself, and man himself is God. In that case God and man are no longer separated and alienated from each other in religious terms, but are one being. This antitheistic atheism leads unavoidably to anthropotheism, to the divinisation of man.... If for this atheism ‘man is finally man’s God’, this may be morally fine as an ideal in face of a situation where man is man’s wolf. But a century’s experience with such anthropotheism has shown that even these human deities can become man’s wolf.... In the enthusiasm of their religious inheritance, the anthropotheists of



Yet, on the basis of his Christology, Irenaeus was able to conceive of an economy that did entail 'promotion into God', and yet avoided the narcissism the Gnostics so effortlessly seemed to stumble into. Given his particular allegiance to John ὁ θεόλογος, it is unsurprising to see Irenaeus turn here to John 10:33-6 where Jesus cites Psalm 82:6-7 ('I said, "You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High. But you will die like mere men"'). Yet his application of the verses is somewhat different to Justin's. Justin had looked primarily to the fall, seeing that

the Holy Ghost reproaches men because they were made like God, free from suffering and death, provided that they kept His commandments, and were deemed deserving of the name of His sons, and yet they, becoming like Adam and Eve, work out death for themselves.<sup>107</sup>

Irenaeus, however, had a more teleological vision: Adam, in his original formation, was not yet even a man, let alone God.<sup>108</sup> Yet, through the proper maturing process of the economy that the incarnation of Jesus Christ effected, that weak *plasma* would become *capax Dei*.<sup>109</sup>

At one level, this salvation can simply be seen as the bestowal of ἀθανασία, and so freedom from both death and sin.<sup>110</sup> This would be consonant with the broader cultural conception of the essence of θεοποίησις being the bestowal of ἀθανασία. The Hellenic world could admit the relatively easy ἀποθέωσις of its heroes because the gods were little more than those simply characterised as 'the immortals', and nothing more than that immortality formally distinguished them from men. Yet immediately a problem is encountered on so monochrome a reading, for Irenaeus will not allow for there to be any such freedom outside of the life of God. Indeed, 'immortality is the glory of the uncreated One'.<sup>111</sup> If θεοποίησις is simply to be reduced to ἀθανασία, such would be a curse: to be 'like one of us' outside of the divine community, to be god outside of God. This was precisely Adam's problem, in that he, the one κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϋ, had lusted to be God himself outside the parameters of the Εἰκὼν, to be

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modern times from Feuerbach to Rilke, from Marx to Bloch, have overlooked the dark side of evil in man and the problem of suffering in the world.' (Moltmann, J., *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974), 251-2).

<sup>107</sup> *Dial.* 124

<sup>108</sup> *Quemadmodum igitur erit Deus, qui nondum factus est homo?* AH 4.39.2

<sup>109</sup> AH 3.19.1; 4.38.4; 5.32.1

<sup>110</sup> Cf. AH 1.10.1; 2.20.3; 3.6.1; 3.18.7; 3.19.1; 3.23.7; 4.38.4; 5.21.3

<sup>111</sup> AH 4.38.3

mature outside of the One who would bring flesh from infancy to maturity. In proclaiming their own autonomous deity, Simon Magus, Menander and Epiphanes had simply inherited their common father's hubristic passion to be like the Most High.<sup>112</sup>

Instead, ἀθανασία is that life of man which is obtained by and consists in beholding and knowing God. To be immortal is to partake of the divine nature (*capere Deum*).<sup>113</sup> In fact, not only is it the case that 'the beholding of God is productive of immortality, but immortality renders one nigh unto God.'<sup>114</sup> This might be said to be the true Gnosticism as against those who are only 'falsely-called Gnostics': ἡ γνῶσις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἥτις ἦν ἀφθαρσία.<sup>115</sup>

In place of an Hellenic ontology of static substances, Irenaeus envisaged redemption involving a dynamic of inter-relationships – the *plasma* constituted in creation by relation to God being led into 'fellowship and unity with God' (for this reason, 'deification' is perhaps to be preferred to the more ontologically questionable 'divinisation').<sup>116</sup> In particular, 'ascension into God' is equivalent to the gift of adoption in the Son so that those who are saved ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father.<sup>117</sup> Thus, 'there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption.'<sup>118</sup> After all, the Psalmist had equated being 'God' or 'gods' with being 'sons of the Most High'. Through the incarnation of the Spirit-anointed Man, the *plasma* of Adam had been taken into the εἰκὼν and imbued with the ὁμοίωσις. Through this divine fellowship, now enjoying and displaying the image and likeness of God, the *plasma* of Adam might approximate to the uncreated One and be said to have started the ascent into God. This is the goal of man's original creation, created in the image and after the likeness of God. Now man can be truly like God, after the model of Jesus Christ.

The difficulty – whether real or only apparent – with many ἀποθέωσις doctrines, is the constant danger of a mysticism or idealism that marginalises or annihilates humanity. This can be perceived in the *Doxastikon at the Praises*, to be recited by the Orthodox at the Feast of the Annunciation:

<sup>112</sup> Cf. AH 1.23; 2.9.2

<sup>113</sup> AH 4.20.6-7; 5.32.1

<sup>114</sup> AH 4.38.3; cf. 4.20.5

<sup>115</sup> AH 1.11.1; 3.10.3; 4.6.4; 4.35.1; 5.26.2; 4.36.7; cf. 1.21.4; Harnack 2, 292, n3; Clement, *Stromata*, 4.21.

<sup>116</sup> AH 4.13.1; cf. Justin, *I Ap.* 10

<sup>117</sup> AH 3.19.1; 5.36.2; cf. 3.6.1; 3.18.7; 4.33.4

<sup>118</sup> AH 4.pref.4; cf. 3.6.1; 3.10.2; 3.19.1; 4.33.4; 4.41.2-3

Adam of old was deceived:  
 wanting to be God he failed to be God.  
 God becomes man,  
 So He can make Adam god.

If this is only an instance of using potentially misleading terminology (terminology which Irenaeus is happy to use in speaking of men becoming ‘God’ or ‘gods’), Gregory of Nyssa shows the reality of the danger in seeing θεοποίησις as the process of becoming wholly other:

that lowly nature, I say, by virtue of its combination with the infinite and boundless element of good, remained no longer in its own measures and properties, but was by the Right Hand of God raised up together with Itself, and became Lord instead of servant, Christ a King instead of a subject, Highest instead of Lowly, *God instead of man* (ἀντὶ ἀνθρώπου θεός).<sup>119</sup>

Such a soteriology of metamorphosis we should not find surprising in a theologian who espoused the doctrine of ἀπανδρόομαι.<sup>120</sup> If salvation for him did necessarily entail the stripping away or dissolution of otherness (such as femininity), then man must necessarily be replaced with God. Yet ἀποθέωσις, for Irenaeus, entailed as little an absurd transmogrification as incarnation had been. His growth motif, and the doctrine of the one Lord Jesus Christ, forbid the possibility of a salvation that is an ontological metamorphosis from the water of humanity into the wine of deity. So contrary is his eschatological objective to any pseudo-spiritual escapism that he is able to refer that exact same augmentation of men that is redemption to the entire cosmos.<sup>121</sup> This is

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<sup>119</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 5.3. It is the understandable – if, as it will turn out, unnecessary – fear of this view of θεοποίησις that Douglas Farrow voices: ‘Irenaeus was interpreted as teaching what quickly became the central motif of eastern theology: “God became man that man might become God.” Behind that dictum which does *not* properly represent his view of things, stands the opposition between Creator and creature that he was fighting in the Gnostics – an opposition that can only be resolved by collapsing the space between the two’ (Farrow, D., ‘St. Irenaeus of Lyons: The Church and the World.’ *Pro Ecclesia* 4.3, Summer 1995, 341). It was a similar fear that drove Dietrich Ritschl, who, uneasily aware of the similarity of much deification theology to the Platonic ideal of the ‘deification’ of the soul by elevation to the perception of ideas, expressed the hope that the ‘deification concept of the ‘best part’ of the Greek theological tradition is a doxological and not an ontological concept.’ (Ritschl, D., *Memory and Hope: An Inquiry Concerning the Presence of Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 95; cf. 93)

<sup>120</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Creation of Man*, 16f.

<sup>121</sup> *Irrationabiles igitur omin modo, qui non expectant tempus augmenti*, AH 4.38.4; αὖξει καὶ συνίσταται ἡ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν ὑπόστασις (*augetur et consistit carnis nostra substantia*), 5.2.3; *Quoniam creatur omnis secundum voluntatem ad incrementum erit*, 5.34.2.



possible because the anointing of Christ with the Spirit is an anointing that effects the spiritualisation of all creation: 'He was named Christ, because through Him the Father anointed and adorned all things.'<sup>122</sup> Yet, as seen above, this is not a spiritualisation that can be understood as the ushering in of a disembodied beatific vision whilst all creatureliness is effectively dissolved. Where the corrupted superficial appearance (σχῆμα) of the world will pass away, its substance or essence (ὑπόστασις, οὐσία) will remain, as God is faithful.<sup>123</sup> That 'increase' of the flesh by the Spirit will be appreciated by all creation to such a degree that, as he sees Isaiah prophesying, 'the lion shall feed on straw. And this indicates the large size and rich quality of the fruits. For if that animal, the lion, feeds upon straw, of what quality must the wheat itself be whose straw shall serve as suitable food for lions?'<sup>124</sup>

Yet in what sense could this be termed θεοποίησις? Irenaeus is emphatic in making the connection between this augmentation and a τελείωσις which is, through the knowledge of good and evil, the ascent from being men to being God or gods. This, then, is the τελείωσις Irenaeus imagined: Man had become the son of the Man, made for a little while lower than the gods, not in order to eradicate and replace men (as Apollinarius might be found guilty of suggesting), but to bring men to the goal for which they had been formed; to be sons of God in the fellowship of the divine nature, enjoyed as the image and likeness of God. More than simply being given the hope of a divine sentence of 'not guilty' or a beatific vision, through the maturing work of redemption, ἄνθρωπος ψυχικόν was brought to enjoy the image and likeness of God – to be loved by the Father through the Son in the eternal fellowship of the Spirit. So man's creation in the image and after the likeness reaches its objective when man begins to participate in the being of God, sharing in the Triune life of God. So the work of God's 'hands' would be accomplished in the divine community's expression and extension of itself. Concerning this promise of the gospel, Robert Jenson writes:

It is the fact of God's Trinity which requires that his concluding gift to us, should he make one, must be inclusion in his own life, the gift not of something other than God but of "all he is." The *triune* God does not and indeed cannot beneficently affect us causally; for him, causal action, with its intrinsic distancing, would mean exclusion from himself and so cursing rather

<sup>122</sup> *Dem.* 53

<sup>123</sup> *AH* 5.36.1, citing 1 Cor. 7:31; Psalms 102:25-8; Isaiah 51:6.

<sup>124</sup> *AH* 5.33.4; cf. Isaiah 11:7; 5.33.3; *Frag.* 4.

than blessing. The goal of all the biblical God's ways is the glory of God. Were an otherwise biblical God – contrary of course to possibility – monadic, his intention of his own glory would be a sort of omnipotent egocentricity, and the reality of God would be a universal moral disaster. But God's glorification of himself is supreme blessing because the *triume* God can and does include creatures in that glory.<sup>125</sup>

Irenaeus would heartily concur, adding only to specify that 'the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.' This is what Irenaeus saw as the fellowship of divine glory with which the son of the Man is crowned in his exaltation: given that "“wheresoever the body is, there shall also the eagles be gathered together,” we do participate in the glory of the Lord, who has both formed us, and prepared us for this, that, when we are with Him, we may partake of His glory.’<sup>126</sup>

That the created partakers of the divine glory could be called 'God' or 'gods' implied as much an abrogation of their originally designated humanity as the divinity of the true man might.<sup>127</sup> Quite the contrary. This is simply the perfection of man's creation in the image of God so that he might be like God. Just as the coming of God to men involved no loss of deity, so the corresponding coming of men to God involves no loss of their humanity. Quite as easily they could be called 'sons of God', 'true men', or simply 'men'.<sup>128</sup>

Man does not give up his existence as man and take upon himself a different existence, viz. God's existence, while his human part disappears.... When Irenaeus represents the idea of a 'deification' of man, this 'deification' coincides with man's 'becoming man'.<sup>129</sup>

For this reason it is unsurprising that Irenaeus does not describe this process with the potentially confusing word θεοποίησις. It is scarcely possible to imagine Irenaeus conceiving the sort of divine distension that would entail God's acquisition of a myriad

<sup>125</sup> Jenson, 311, italics original

<sup>126</sup> AH 4.14.1, citing Matt. 24:28

<sup>127</sup> There is another similarity to be found here to Apollinaris, who held that flesh, having been united with divine Spirit, could properly be called 'God' (Frag. 147, cf. Prestige, G. L. *Fathers and Heretics*. The Bampton Lectures, 1940 (London: SPCK, 1940), 108).

<sup>128</sup> AH 5.36.1. Commenting on this theme in its later historical context, John Meyendorff suggests 'Man is not fully man unless he is in communion with God' (Meyendorff, J., *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS, 1982), 188).

<sup>129</sup> Wingren, 209-10

of other 'hands'. Then, when he speaks of men 'rising above the angels', he is not imagining something superhuman, but entirely human, given that Adam, even as an infant, was secretly established as lord over the angels.<sup>130</sup> It is wholly proper that man should, having been for a while under the heavenly host, be crowned above them. Any doctrine of θεοποίησις that entailed a loss of manhood would be akin to the Gnostic escapism that resulted from the lack of Irenaeus' under-girding doctrine of the true man, the one Lord Jesus Christ. Such were the theologies, far removed from Irenaeus' thinking, that led to an Encratite aspiration to permanent celibacy: Christ became flesh that flesh might be removed or become something wholly other and relinquish its natural state. Instead of flesh being superseded by Spirit, Irenaeus saw that by assuming the flesh of his creation the Son of God 'caused man to cleave to and to become one with God' such that he might 'win back to God that man which had departed from God'.<sup>131</sup> This was the goal he saw Paul referring to in 1 Corinthians as, far from condemning marriage, he sought to protect its sanctity: ἔσονται γάρ, φησίν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἔστιν.<sup>132</sup>

In the marriage of ἄνθρωπος πνευματικόν to the *plasma* of flesh, the head remained the head and the body remained the body, only now united in marital harmony. In other words, for the arch-adversary of the Gnostics, deification is not the antithesis to, but the reality of, hominisation. God, after all, has not left man dead, but raised him up to enjoy the marriage feast – so man still exists, only now as one with God. For, when Irenaeus writes of Jesus Christ becoming what we are, 'that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself' to what would he be bringing us? Within the economy that Irenaeus describes, the answer could only be that Jesus Christ had taken and perfected the *plasma* of Adam such that Adam, in Christ, might be *homo humanus*. If to be Man, for Irenaeus, is to be God the Son as he is loved by God the Father in God the Spirit, then deification is the process of being united to that Man, and so to being loved by the Father in the eternal fellowship of the Spirit. If incarnation was not ἐνανθρωπήσις for Christ, it was for Adam. Then that word which constituted the being of the *protoplastus* is fulfilled: 'Let us make man in our Image.'

<sup>130</sup> AH 5.36.3; Dem. 11-2, 16

<sup>131</sup> AH 3.18.7; 3.10.2

<sup>132</sup> 'For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one spirit.' (1 Corinthians 6:16-17).



## 3

## When is Man?

We have seen already that Irenaeus' philippic against the Gnostics can not helpfully be categorised as a lexicon of heresies or even an elenctic catalogue of dogmas. In contrast, in the *Adversus Haereses*, we are presented with a polemical biography of man – one who is, essentially, the 'time being' – and his relations with the one God. Thus, something more like a *Pilgrim's Progress* than a *Summa Theologiae* was to be the weapon with which the Gnostic mythology of all-determining, atemporal αἰώνιοι would be fought. This being the case, it would be a decidedly unbalanced enterprise that undertook to analyse Irenaeus' charting of the οἰκονομία ἀνθρώπου without asking 'when is man?'.

## Redeeming Time

What, then, is time? If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not.<sup>1</sup>

The aporia of time is never discretely examined in the extant literature of the second century. That is not to say, however, that it did not serve both to inform and reveal the nature of Gnostic mythology and soteriology, and Irenaeus' dynamic response equally. Here, as elsewhere, Gnosticism found deep roots in that mature Hellenic thinking which had found a way to accommodate something of both the Eleatic denial of true temporality and the observable phenomenon of Heraclitus: πάντα ῥέει. In particular, this entailed a debt to the Aristotelian conception of a dual cosmos in which the revolving, superluminary spheres of unchanging aether dictated the existence of the subluminary world. This debt was particularly unsurprising for Valentinus in Alexandria, where his contemporary Claudius Ptolemaeus was ironing out some of the observable discrepancies in the Aristotelian system. It should not be thought, as is so often the case, that the model's geocentrism was the result of an anthropocentrism that Irenaeus would have shared. Where Irenaeus would undoubtedly have been geocentrist for just such reasons, the Aristotelian system envisaged an ontological hierarchy; in rising from the earth above the luminaries, change and corruptibility were replaced with eternality and divinity until, behind all the heavenly spheres, the sphere of the *primum mobile*, the unmoved mover, was reached. Within that model, the change so apparent as characteristic of the world was considered to reveal its inherently inferior ontology, allowing events on earth to recede into the shadows of the primary significance of the revolving heavens. The only way for such being to be accommodated would be in repetition and circularity – an idea often represented by the *ourobouros*, a snake biting its own tail – the closest representation mere materiality could make of the absolute immobility at the hub of all true being.<sup>2</sup> Thus there could be no real protology or

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* XI.14.17

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 37c-38a. In the ancient Greek Pantheon, Χρόνος, the self-formed πρωτόγονος of time who encircled the universe, driving the rotation of the heavens and the eternal passage of time, was serpentine in form. It was he who, with his mate, the serpentine Ἀνάγκη (Inevitability), entwined the world-egg in their coils and split it apart, forming the ordered universe of earth, sea and sky. For the Ophites or Naasenes in particular, the serpent held a particular significance as being their good genius (hence their name, derived from the Greek ὄφις or Hebrew שִׁנָּי for serpent). In intriguing harmony with the Cainites, the Ophite-Naasenes held that the serpent was not the *agent provocateur* of the fall, but

eschatology, but instead the revelation of the perfection of that hub in the uniform revolutions of the stars circling above in the orderly heavens. Where once the cosmic order expressed in such endless repetition inspired awe, increasingly existence under the stars came to be seen as the experience of a slavery of endless reincarnations to a fate sealed in the heavens, as the heavenly bodies or ἄρχοντες – and so, with them, all existence under their influence – came to be seen as more diabolical than divine. The heavenly revolutions began to look increasingly less like the beautiful dance of the *carmen universitatis* and more like the crushing turns of a millstone.<sup>3</sup> Time could only serve as the arena – the prison house – for such bondage, or be experienced as degeneration. (It has to be said that in many ways little here is different from the modern conception of time other than the replacement of the heavenly ἄρχοντες with the revolutions of the hands on a clock. The reign of the clock, or, what Robert Banks has termed the ‘tyranny of time’, seems to have turned equally sour in having seen the evolution of a society characterised by a pressurised timelessness in which time remains only a prison or millstone.<sup>4</sup>) Here was a fate worse than that Hobbes was later to imagine: life would be nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and, not mercifully short, but repeated. Oscar Cullmann expresses it thus:

Because in Greek thought time is not conceived as an upward sloping line with beginning and end, but rather as a circle, the fact that man is bound to time must here be experienced as an enslavement, as a curse. Time moves about in the eternal circular course in which everything keeps recurring. That is why the philosophical thinking of the Greek world labours with the problem of

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(perhaps even the definitive) partaker of the divine nature. Its inherent immortality was expressed by its holding of its tail in its mouth, consuming and entering into itself, shedding and renewing its skin, and so, Phoenix-like, rejuvenating.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. De Santillana and von Dechend’s use of this image, originally from Trimalchio in Petronius (*Satyricon* 39), De Santillana, G., and von Dechend, H., *Hamlet’s Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission through Myth* (Boston: Nonpareil, 1977), 138. J. R. R. Tolkien is the most eloquent exponent of this anti-sphericism in his relation of the history of Middle-earth and the history of its spherical rings. Aware that the globe is the spatial complement to Hellenism’s temporal image of circular time, he describes the bending of the world into a ring-like orb as a curse on man’s sin, trapping him, like Adam and Eve, east of paradise: ‘Men may sail now West, if they will, as far as they may, and come no nearer to Valinor or the Blessed Realm, but return only into the east and so back again; for the world is round, and finite, and a circle inescapable – save by death. Only the ‘immortals’, the lingering Elves, may still if they will, wearying of the circle of the world, take ship and find the ‘straight way’, and come to the ancient or True West, and be at peace.’ (‘From a letter by J. R. R. Tolkien to Milton Waldman, 1951’ in *The Silmarillion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1999), xxviii; cf. ‘Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age’, 366)

<sup>4</sup> Banks, R. J., *The Tyranny of Time* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1997)



time. But that is also why all Greek striving for redemption seeks as its goal to be freed from this eternal circular course and thus to be freed from time itself.<sup>5</sup>

Such a cyclical conception of time has been far from confined to classical Hellenism. Instead, it can be seen as an ever recurrent mode. Irenaeus' description of the Marcosian understanding of the relation of eternity to temporality bears an almost total resemblance to Hellenistic dualism:

In addition to these things, they declare that the Demiurge, desiring to imitate the infinitude, and eternity, and immensity, and freedom from all measurement by time of the Ogdoad above, but, as he was the fruit of defect, being unable to express its permanence and eternity, had recourse to the expedient of spreading out its eternity into times, and seasons, and vast numbers of years, imagining, that by the multitude of such times he might imitate its immensity. They declare further, that the truth having escaped him, he followed that which was false, and that, for this reason, when the times are fulfilled, his work shall perish.<sup>6</sup>

Temporality, for Gnosticism, being the corrupt and disposable imitation of eternity, it is unsurprising to find again evidence of a circular view of time. Thus Simon Magus and Carpocrates are just two named as notable advocates of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.<sup>7</sup> Only in such perpetual reiteration could the Gnostic live the horoscopic life of the zodiac and so attest to celestial reality. A doctrine could not be found to contrast more starkly with what Irenaeus perceived to be the cosmic goal of resurrection than that of metempsychosis. One described the final destiny and goal of the body; the other spoke of a never ending return and re-imprisonment of the soul. That being the case, it might be said that the entire shape, not just of the chronology, but of the soteriology and cosmology of Gnostic thought as a whole was cyclical. Dietrich Ritschl has suggested that Gnosticism

is to be defined from the standpoint of theology as the concept of a movement of the saviour, the *Logos* or the *heavenly man* from the highest God down into

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<sup>5</sup> Cullmann, O., *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (London: SCM, 1951), 52

<sup>6</sup> *AH* 1.17.2; cf. *Timaeus* 37c-38c

<sup>7</sup> *AH* 1.23.2-3; 25.4

the region of human perception and back to its place of origin.... The movement of the saviour is a *circle*, the journey of the redeemer from God down to earth and home to God.<sup>8</sup>

Ritschl himself feels that Irenaeus, with his description of the descent of the heavenly man and his return to God, effectively fell into that framework.<sup>9</sup> However, as we shall see, this seems to be an inadequate and truncated reading of Irenaeus in that it entirely fails to take account of his optimistic teleology. Far from being the dupe of his own antagonists, Irenaeus showed himself to be keenly aware of the influence of Hellenic cosmology, even seeing how it managed to colonise beyond the borders of receptive Gnosticism, gaining territory even within the very heartland of orthodoxy. For instance, Plato's thought in the *Timaeus* of the heavenly revolutions being an imitation of eternity was probably not far from Augustine's mind when he spoke of them as the *carmen universitatis*. It is hardly surprising, then, when it is to Augustine's adaptation of Platonic chronology that Robert Jenson points in giving an aetiology of the Western impasse over time:

what Augustine seems at bottom to have assumed is the Platonic picture of the turning wheel of time with the geometric still point of eternity at its centre. As a Christian he could not be content with this picture; he cut the circle and stretched it out as a line, to model the biblical understanding of reality as history. But he continued to think of the point of eternity as equidistant from all temporal points. Many puzzles within Western discourse about time result from this oxymoronic root metaphor, of a point perpendicular to a straight line yet equidistant from all points on it.<sup>10</sup>

Cyclical chronology corresponds to what Ritschl thought he could detect in Irenaeus, which is Mircea Eliade's 'myth of the eternal return' seen in every restorationist soteriology.<sup>11</sup> And indeed, the development and codification of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ritschl, D., *Memory and Hope: An Inquiry Concerning the Presence of Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 79, italics original.

<sup>9</sup> Ritschl, 82

<sup>10</sup> Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32

<sup>11</sup> Eliade, M., *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Trask, W. R. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). Moltmann picks this up when he asks: 'Did Thomas Aquinas mean anything different when he said: "The end of things corresponds to their beginning: after all, God is the beginning and end of all things. Therefore the emergence of things from their beginning corresponds to their return to their

liturgical calendar since seems to have worked most effectively in remoulding the Church's teleological movement and hope into an enjoyment of 'the ever-circling years' when 'comes round the age of gold'. On such a model, eschatological hope becomes at the very best a simple return to Eden, which hope, as we have already seen, the bishop of Lyons never shares.

However, that said, it would be too crude to describe Gnosticism as mere second-hand Hellenism (of whatever sort) for the masses. Whilst without any doubt there was a great deal of overlap and continuity between the two, that overlap does not stretch so far that the Gnostic αἰώνιοι can be seen simply as reincarnations of Hellenism's celestial ἄρχοντες. For instance, it would not have been entirely true to say that for the Gnostic, history is bunk.<sup>12</sup> Gnostic thought envisaged neither pure temporality nor pure atemporality but a mythological thinking that straddled and incorporated both. Thus, whilst the world remains little more than a stage on which mythical events in the Πλήρωμα are acted out, individuals can and do lay claim to be one of the αἰώνιοι, or appropriate their work spiritually (by which is meant internally and unobservably), allowing the claim that for them, the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:18). Yet still, 'Gnostic time is only the consequence and reflection of the adventures or conflict of transcendent realities, an episodic copy of an atemporal tragedy, and the Gnostic's effort is to transcend time in order to establish himself.'<sup>13</sup> Effectively it thus remains for the Gnostic that man in time is very much the passive object or shadow of any moment of spiritual significance, and far from being the very locus of such a moment, as in Irenaeus' thought.

Oscar Cullmann notes, 'no theologian of antiquity grasped so clearly as did Irenaeus the radical opposition which emerges between Greek and Biblical thinking as to this point, namely, the question of the conception of time.'<sup>14</sup> Without doubt, in place of the Gnostic vision of a supra-temporal drama, Irenaeus posited a supremely temporal soteriology.<sup>15</sup> However, Cullmann understands the contrast between Irenaeus and

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end"? At all events, for Aquinas time has a symmetrical, circular structure.' (Moltmann, J., *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 2003), 99), 35, quoting *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 90.3). In place of Aquinas' restorationism (a circularity he sees as deeply insidious elsewhere, such as in the theology of Bultmann), Moltmann posits creation as an open system. It is by no means necessary, however, that Irenaeus need have proposed the same alternative beforetime. For the bishop, the project is one of orchestrated growth.

<sup>12</sup> *AH* 1.5.6; cf. the mythopoeism of Ptolemy in particular.

<sup>13</sup> Henri-Charles Puech, 'Gnosis and Time' in *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks* (Pantheon: New York, 1957), 83

<sup>14</sup> Cullmann, 57

<sup>15</sup> In order to understand Harnack's difficulty in accommodating the breadth and ontological reality of Irenaeus' scheme of redemption, it is worth noting the similarity of a gospel of mere ethics to such supra-



Aristotelian cosmology to consist simply of an entirely linear chronology replacing the cyclical model.<sup>16</sup> In fact, he holds that for Irenaeus ‘the line runs on in so straight a course that the break which resulted from the fall into sin is not sufficiently taken into account.’<sup>17</sup> Thus, so rectilinear is the shape of redemptive history in Irenaeus’ chronology that the scheme ultimately collapses under its own weight. Yet, whilst it will be necessary to return later to the serious charge that Irenaeus ironed out the Fall so as not to wrinkle his chronology, for the moment we can note that a number of factors should warn us against this minimalist reading. Two in particular are worth mentioning here: first, a purely linear reading of Irenaeus’ chronology is liable to ignore the crucial double theme in the *Adversus Haereses* – and indeed, the *Demonstration* – of maturation and ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. Where, in such a reading, could Irenaeus find the ‘space’ for the *novum* of the incarnation? Also, Irenaeus’ ontology never disappears down into the solipsistic hole that is the constant danger of entirely linear chronologies, in which the present constitutes the only reality. After all, the bishop is a far cry from the modern replacement of order and cosmos with a history that is no more than ‘one damn thing after another’.

Peter Forster offers a more refined alternative to Cullmann’s reading, in which a second level of time is superimposed upon the simple linear level. Thus, he says, ‘we might describe Irenaeus’ understanding of time as comprising two aspects: fallen, linear time, which is redeemed, and the redeemed time of the incarnate Christ, by which it is being redeemed.’<sup>18</sup> Certainly this evaluation is more sensitive to Irenaeus’ concern that the οἰκονομία entail an anthropological and cosmic augmentation that is the product of the incarnation. However, there is need for caution concerning such an interpretation. Gustaf Wingren notes that recapitulation means

the accomplishment of God’s plan of salvation, and this accomplishment is within history, in a time sequence, and is not an episode at one particular point

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temporal redemption (Harnack, A., *The History of Dogma* trans. N. Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1897), cf. esp. Vol. 2, p230ff.).

<sup>16</sup> Cullmann, O., *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959), 190. This interpretation is almost certainly what led Frend to hold the same view (Frend, W. H. C., *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 245).

<sup>17</sup> Cullmann, O., *Christ and Time*, 57

<sup>18</sup> Forster, P. R., *God and the World in Saint Irenaeus: Theological Perspectives* (PhD: Edinburgh, 1985), 140. Douglas Farrow comments on this, that ‘we are not to think in terms of a Christological *nunc stans* as a counterpoint to linear progress, but of a pneumatological intersection of times, where time itself is understood as a function of personal existence, and personal existence as a function of communion with God through co-humanity with Christ.’ (Farrow, D., *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 65, n92).

of time. It is a continuous process in which the οἰκονομία, *dispositio*, of God is manifested by degrees.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of a double-decker chronology smacks too much of the very Aristotelian and Gnostic cosmologies Irenaeus was seeking to eradicate. It is quite possible to appeal again to Ritschl's assertion that it was precisely here, in his chronology, that Irenaeus showed most clearly the effects of having imbibed the Gnostic poison. Yet, precisely in opposition to the Aristotelian twofold system consisting of immutable heavens and a mutable earth, it was a great part of Irenaeus' genius to do for theology what Newton was later to do for science in opposition to the Aristotelian scholasticism of his day: to demonstrate that the cosmos does not consist of two discrete systems but one creation, a universe. There is no hypertime or metatime – whether that be Christologically understood or not – to intersect with the time experienced by the fallen creation.<sup>20</sup>

In drawing the perhaps surprising and unlikely comparison between Irenaeus and Newton at this point, it is worth pausing to resolve a potential misunderstanding. Max Jammer has traced the influence of pantheistic elements within the cabala on Newton's concept of absolute space and time, and it is certainly the case that before such absolutes faced their Götterdämmerung in relativity theory, Euclidean and Newtonian cosmology attributed to space and time all the hallmarks of classically conceived divinity.<sup>21</sup> It should not, of course, be thought that with the demise of those systems such attributes have also been removed, despite relativity's general acceptance as a norm even outside the boundaries of the philosophy of science. It was the supposed indivisibility of Democritus' ἄτομος ('that which cannot be cut'<sup>22</sup>) that had given it the quality of eternality, and so of deity, such that its splitting was a true Götterdämmerung. As soon as the universe is considered to be infinite, it assumes the

<sup>19</sup> Wingren, G., *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 81

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Williams, D. C., 'The Myth of Passage', in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 48, Issue 15 (Jul. 19, 1951), 457-472. Here Cullmann is closer to the mark when he states that what can be found in Irenaeus is the same as that found in the New Testament, where 'it is not time and eternity that stand opposed, but limited time and unlimited, endless time.' (*Christ and Time*, 46). This, of course, necessarily (and, it would seem, correctly) reads the phrase τοὺς αἰῶνας in Heb 1:2 as cognate with κόσμος.

<sup>21</sup> Jammer, M., *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 95ff. The connection or identification between God and space had been derived in particular from the use of מְקוֹם as a divine name in first century Palestinian Judaism (cf. Jammer, 28ff). Cf. Hawking, S. W., *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam, 1988), 18.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 15:52, where Paul speaks of the ἄτομος as constitutive of the boundary (or bridgehead) between this age and the one to come.

quality of the ἄτομος. And, indeed, the historic connection between such atomic theory and the infinity of the universe can be seen in such figures as the sixteenth century disciple of Lucretius, Giordano Bruno, in his dialogue *De l'infinito universo e mondi*. Yet Democritus' eternal atoms have all too easily been replaced by eternal physical laws such that, with Spinoza, Stephen Hawking can maintain that such laws are all a 'creative deity' would need.<sup>23</sup> The consequent effect was described by Pascal, who, when faced with such cold divinity in the heavens, could no longer ask 'what is man that you are mindful of him?', but instead wrote 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.'<sup>24</sup> If Schopenhauer was right in calling pantheism merely a polite form of atheism, the ultimate result is that, with God absent (or absented) from his space, there was literally 'nothing' left behind save a cosmic agoraphobia, or what Moltmann describes as *horror vacui*, the terror of space.<sup>25</sup>

The question for us now, then, is: would the denial of any dual chronology – time and hypertime, or fallen time and redeemed time – leave Irenaeus in an equivalent pantheism, time having assumed all the attributes of absoluteness? Perhaps, as seen above, Irenaeus' antagonism to the Epicurean tenets of Gnosticism (Epicurus being perhaps the foremost classical proponent of Democritus' eternal atom theory) should allay our fears somewhat. Yet Richard Norris and Eric Osborn are amongst those who have felt that Irenaeus has – wittingly or unwittingly – stumbled into just such a cosmology.<sup>26</sup> The reason for this lies, to a large extent, in his willingness – and indeed eagerness – to employ the historic formula shared by the Valentinian Gnostics in which the God who is the Πλήρωμα is described as containing or enclosing (χωρῶν) all things, whilst being contained or enclosed (αχώρητος) by none.<sup>27</sup> Thus 'the entire universe is within Him', whilst God simultaneously fills all things, inhering that creation completely.<sup>28</sup> In an age when the domination of the mechanical clock – the latest incarnation of chronometry to assume and reinforce the cyclical conception of time – has effectively managed to abstract and objectify time, perhaps it is harder to see that

<sup>23</sup> Hawking, 12, 174; cf. Spinoza, B., *Ethics*, trans. Elwes, R. H. M. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), i, appendix.

<sup>24</sup> Pascal, B., *The Pensées*, translated by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1961), 206

<sup>25</sup> Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 125

<sup>26</sup> Norris, R. A., *God and World in Early Christian Theology: A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen* (New York; Seabury, 1965), 86; Osborn, E., *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 35.

<sup>27</sup> *Dem.* 4

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *AH* 1.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.12.7; 2.30.9; 2.35.3; 3.4.2; 5.18.3; *Dem.* 4; cf. Schoedel, W. R., 'Enclosing, Not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God', in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*; eds. Schoedel, W. R., & Wilken, R. L., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 77f.



the formula χωρῶν καὶ ἀχώρητος never implied any pantheistic absoluteness of time. It is the case, though, that at no point does Irenaeus grant any such independent ontology to time upon which such an attribute could be built. With so robust a Christology (within which his pneumatology must also be accounted for), Irenaeus was enabled successfully to tread the line between a divorce of God from the world and the pantheism that annihilates all that is other from God (and, according to Schopenhauer, eventually annihilates God himself). In the place of annihilation or divorce he posited a Christologically effected marriage of the two: there is both God and contingent, created being; both that which contains and that which is contained; that which inheres and that which is inhered.

It appears that we have begun to leave the question of time and trespass upon the matter of space. Yet is this a real trespass for Irenaeus? Or is it the case that he is consistent enough to posit a continuum between time and space? We must agree with the latter, and so agree that his account of space (χωρῶν καὶ ἀχώρητος) is illuminative of his account of time. It is because all things are contained by God that Irenaeus can be so optimistic. Space is the stage for that time in which the drama of redemption can take place, and, being contained by God, it is a drama that, from beginning to end, takes place within his sway. For all the progress he posits within his chronology, there is simply not the space for an open process.

To return to the question of Irenaeus' chronology proper, it appears that in order to appreciate and correctly apprehend his notion of time, there is a need to be sensitive to the dangers of the Aristotelianism that ever lurked behind his Gnostic opponents, whilst at the same time, with Forster, taking account of his concern for an οἰκονομία marked by growth. If, with Cullmann, we might be allowed to depict time in spatial terms, what then appears is a single chronology shaped by ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, the ἀνα bearing the sense, not of pure cyclical repetition, but of a virtuous spiral woven together with the themes of fulfilment and augmentation. From its original designation as καλός, time would see creation brought to be καλὰ λίαν. Here was a supremely positive chronology: in place of seeing χρόνος as a prison or arena of necessary decay, history simply recording the steady decline from an age of gold to one of silver, then bronze and finally iron, or Gnosticism's mythology in which time was the very form of the corruption of an original Πλήρωμα, Irenaeus saw χρόνος offered as καιρός – the opportunity for πλήρωσις.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. *AH* 1.5.6

Maturation alone, however, could never constitute the spiral dynamic of time. It is the dual use of *καιρός* that helps to provide this, for, whilst *χρόνος* as a whole is offered as *καιρός*, yet there can be said to be a more specific *καιρός*. This *καιρός*, which Eve had first refused to wait for in presumptuously seeking *ἀποθέωσις* independently, Mary is told to wait for at Cana.<sup>30</sup> This will be the temporal co-ordinates of God's definitive engagement with humanity. This should not be understood to constitute a second spiral, a 'Christ-time' as against an 'Adam-time', for this is *τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου*.<sup>31</sup> Where Marcion held to an unheralded and unexpected incarnation that broke history into quite discrete fragments, Irenaeus saw prophecy and expectation. Thus, in addition to the actual appearances of the truly present Son of God to the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets, events could be typological of that then present person's still future work. So, Moses' staff thrown down and transformed to swallow up the serpents of the Egyptian Magi was a type of the incarnation and the swallowing of death and sin;<sup>32</sup> Moses' marriage to a Cushite was prophetic of the marriage of the Word to the Church of the Gentiles;<sup>33</sup> the law given was full of types of Christ's incarnate work;<sup>34</sup> Gideon's fleece typified the original blessing of the flock of Israel with the dew of the Spirit before the hardening of Israel and the blessing of the Gentiles;<sup>35</sup> the first *Ἰησοῦς*, leading the people of God into the promised land, was a type of the second *Ἰησοῦς*, leading the people into a renewed creation.<sup>36</sup> Yet, as his dual use of *καιρός* shows, Irenaeus saw something stronger within the *οἰκονομία*: not just prophecy and expectation, but a bias within the very fabric (if we may use so ontologically loaded a word) of time toward incarnation. It is to that that we shall now turn.

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<sup>30</sup> *AH* 3.16.7

<sup>31</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>32</sup> *AH* 3.21.8; cf. Exod. 7:8-12; Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:54-6

<sup>33</sup> *AH* 4.20.12

<sup>34</sup> *AH* 4.11.4; 4.14.3

<sup>35</sup> *AH* 3.17.3

<sup>36</sup> Frag. 19

### One Economy of Father, Son and Spirit

Irenaeus couches that inclination in somewhat different terms, however. First and foremost for him, Jesus Christ is the ἀρχή, the ruling Head and Beginning, in his relationship to the Law, the Church, humanity, and all creation.<sup>37</sup> Thus he refuses to divorce Christology from protology and so give ground to any quasi-Marcionism that might entail the temporal precedence of creation to redemption. To concede that would be to allow the dissection of the single οἰκονομία that is his refutation of false knowledge. Yet, in respect to all these (Law, Church, humanity and creation), Jesus Christ is not only also the ἀρχή, but the determinative one definitively appearing at the end: the ἀρχή at the τέλος.<sup>38</sup> That Irenaeus does not have solely temporal categories in mind when referring to the beginning and end is clear when he writes of the incarnation joining ‘the end to the beginning, that is, man to God.’<sup>39</sup> Even with that added nuance, still it remains that in trying to grasp his chronology, the primary – and indeed the ultimate – question seems to be: ‘why should Christ the beginning appear at the end?’<sup>40</sup> To answer that question, we need first to understand in what sense Irenaeus understands Jesus Christ to be the ἀρχή.

A good litmus test for any doctrine of creation must be ‘Is the incarnate Jesus relevant here?’ For the Gnostic, the answer had to be a categorical, and even puzzled, ‘No’. For Irenaeus, the answer is a most emphatic ‘Yes’. Not because there is created being eternally before the Father, a λόγος ἔνσαρκος; but because there is the Son, whose very being stretches towards an historical σάρκωσις, a union with the created *plasma*. This one – and not the abstract ‘humanity’ of so many individualist predestinarian soteriologies – is defined as Man, the companion (πολίτης) of God, the specific object of God’s love.<sup>41</sup> To speak of God and man as abstracted substances or categories would be to return to Gnostic mythopoeism, which Irenaeus absconds from in favour of the particularity of humanity and divinity in Christ.

<sup>37</sup> AH 3.22.3; 4.12.4; cf. Pro. 8:22-3; Isa. 44:6; 48:12; Col. 1:18; Rev. 22:13. It was with this in mind that some of the fathers chose to translate **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, Gen 1:1, with ἐν Λόγῳ (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycus*, 11, 10; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6, 7; Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, 1, 4, 15; Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 8f., 24; cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1, 14).

<sup>38</sup> AH 3.18.7; 5.pref.; 5.8.1

<sup>39</sup> AH 4.20.4

<sup>40</sup> AH 1.10.3

<sup>41</sup> Dem. 76; Zech. 13:7



It is the personal relationship between this Man and God that constitutes beginning, not an impersonal (or, to be more accurate, what would later be called enhypostatic) relationship between God and the created substance of flesh. For, given that ‘the Father bears the creation and His own Word simultaneously’, the dynamic of the relationship between God and his spoken Word, God and his beloved companion, Man, the Father and the Son, can be seen to be constitutive of that between God and his creation.<sup>42</sup> The similarity of these two relationships – and the dependence of the latter upon the former – is expressed in Irenaeus’ translation of Genesis 1:1 as ‘A Son in the beginning God established then heaven and earth’, on which Robe comments:

Irenaeus opposes the two crucial moments in the life of the Son: His generation or appearance before the Father when the world was not yet created, and His birth in the flesh. He insists on the first one, but always within a cosmogony context that seems to display its dialectical movement: he was made a beginning before heaven and earth *in order to be* the principle of the universe.<sup>43</sup>

The Word, then, is never considered by Irenaeus *in seipso*, but always with a view to the economy, his very relationship as Son borne and contained by the Father informing and supplying the nature of contingent and contained being. It is in this sense that creation can be considered to be ‘through’ Christ. Robert Jenson, commenting on John’s doctrinal summary of Genesis 1 ‘In the beginning was the Word’, notes

An equivalent “In the beginning was the Son and the Son was with God and the Son was God” is a true proposition of a developed Christology, but,

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<sup>42</sup> AH 5.18.2. Wolfhart Pannenberg, whilst using slightly different Christological categories from Irenaeus, acknowledges a similar dynamic operating: ‘In the Son is the origin of all that differs from the Father.... The existence of Jesus, like that of all creatures, has its basis in God, the Creator of the world. With his difference and self-distinction from God, however, it is grounded in the self-distinction of the eternal Son from the Father. Hence the eternal Son is the ontic basis of the human existence of Jesus in his relation to God as Father. But if from all eternity, and thus also in the creation of the world, the Father is not without the Son, the eternal Son is not merely the ontic basis of the existence of Jesus in his self-distinction from the Father as the one God; he is also the basis of the distinction and independent existence of all creaturely reality.’ (Pannenberg, W., *Systematic Theology*, trans. Bromiley, G. W. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans & Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1994, 1998), Vol. 2, 22-3).

<sup>43</sup> Robe, A., *Hacia la primera teología de la procesión del Verbo* (Roma: 1958), 134-5, commenting on Dem. 43 in Ochagavía, J., *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus’ Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 102.

significantly, does not appear in Scripture. The reason, it may be suggested, is that it is a formalism and is materially empty.<sup>44</sup>

Irenaeus would disagree that the proposition is materially empty. 'Son' is a most pertinent title for the Word as principle of creation: 'Since then the Word establishes, that is to say, works bodily, and grants the reality of being, and the Spirit gives order and form to the diversity of the powers; rightly and fittingly is the Word called the Son, and the Spirit the Wisdom of God.'<sup>45</sup> Instead of the *Βυθός* between God and man, the *οἰκονομία ἀνθρώπου* acknowledges, not two jealous parties, but one united enterprise of the Father and the Son. Instead of rooting creation in celestial upheaval and discord, Irenaeus' intention was to root creation in the eternally constitutive love of God for his Son Jesus Christ, so affirming it as originally and intrinsically good. Gerhard May argues that the import of Irenaeus' *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine was precisely this: to make clear that there had been no external constraint upon God motivating creation, nor a material cause, nor any moulding of a resistant other.<sup>46</sup> For creation to be a mere resolve of God's (perhaps arbitrary) will would not be strong enough a position to take on the Gnostic menace, nor would it take seriously enough the being of the God who 'speaks exactly what He thinks', who finds his *ὑπόστασις* in *ἔκστασις*.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to the vicissitudes of the Gnostic *Πλήρωμα*, here was one God who, as Albert Einstein would later put it, does not play dice. Thus it is as the companion and loved Son of the Father that the man Jesus Christ is the *πρωτότοκος*, the *ἀρχή* over all.

With just the same refusal to presage the type of question prompted by more Antiochene Christologies, 'Is redemption the work of the human or divine nature?', so Irenaeus rejected any such awkward dichotomy between Christ's being and his work anywhere within the *οἰκονομία*. Thus could he envisage salvation, not as a last-ditch *deus ex machina* for creation, but as an aspect of the very same *οἰκονομία*. As the Church is watered by the four streams of the gospels, so Eden's four rivers flowed out

<sup>44</sup> Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78, n. 28

<sup>45</sup> *Dem.* 5. Behr remarks that the Armenian translated 'works bodily' could 'suggest either "works for the body," "does the work of the body," or "works with the body" (as Weber), or alternatively "gives body," "corporealizes"' (Behr, J. (trans. and commentary), *Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, N. Y.: SVS, 1997), 103, n. 20). Smith adds that 'Son' carries the sense of an expression of the Father on the plane of contact with created things in Athenagoras (*Suppl.* 10) and Tatian (*Or. Ad Graecos* 5) that is similar to the concept of the *λόγος προφορικός* (Smith, J. P., *St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), 140).

<sup>46</sup> May, G., *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*, trans. Worrall, A.S. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 164ff.

<sup>47</sup> *AH* 2.28.5

to the ends of the earth (Eden, rather than Delphi, being for Irenaeus the true navel of the earth), such that the cosmos could be seen to be inherently cruciform.<sup>48</sup> Creation itself was the beginning of πλήρωσις. Where the nature of creation is salvific in its expulsion of darkness and ordering of chaos, the nature of salvation is creative in its bringing into being new life through the very same Word: 'God the Father was rich in mercy: He sent forth His creative (τεχνίτης) Word.... And His light appeared and dispelled the darkness.'<sup>49</sup> Creation was never the secular foundation upon which divergent soteriological projects could be built or imagined. Because of the centripetal work of the Word inherent in all creation 'even dumb animals tremble and yield at the invocation of His name', whilst Gentiles could follow the Word of God *sine instructione literarum* since 'by means of the creation itself, the Word reveals God the Creator'.<sup>50</sup>

By this understanding of the overflowing nature of the Son's generation by the Father, the creation as a whole can be seen, not only as anthropologically directed, but also as anthropologically moored. There could not be a sharper contrast between this vision and the Gnostic vision of the anthropological project as a mere by-product of celestial conflict, which has been so determinative throughout much of the Church's history. When Milton wrote 'Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit', he was making epic a dominant tradition ennobled by luminaries from Origen to Anselm as he ascribed it to the demonic pique of the exiled hordes of Pandaemonium.<sup>51</sup> Irenaeus, however, went back even beyond the fall of man in his grounding of the οἰκονομία ἀνθρώπου to see a true 'anthropic principle': creation's existence being entirely dependent on Man.<sup>52</sup> Peter Brown notes that, whether through this or the elaborate cosmogony of the Gnostics, such an anthropological grounding for cosmology was necessary, since

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<sup>48</sup> Dem. 34; AH 3.11.8

<sup>49</sup> Dem. 37; cf. AH 5.15.2

<sup>50</sup> AH 2.6.2; 4.24.2; 4.6.6

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man*, E. T. of *Cur Deus Homo* by E. W. Fairweather, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*. Library of Christian Classics X (London: SCM, 1956), chaps. 16-8

<sup>52</sup> AH 5.29.1; cf. 4.5.1; Justin Martyr's *Second Apology* §4. Theologians cannot expect the natural sciences to provide the kind of nuance they themselves proffer here, and yet the usual formulation of the anthropic principle as expressed by John Wheeler is surely still a most welcome discovery: 'It is not only that man is adapted to the universe, the universe is adapted to man. Imagine a universe in which one or another of the fundamental dimensionless constants of physics is altered by a few percent one way or another? Man could never come into being in such a universe. That is the centralp of the anthropic principle. According to this principle, a life-giving factor lies at the centre of the whole machinery and design of the world.' (Burrow, J. D., and Tipler, F. J., *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), viii)



Second-century thinkers invariably regarded the human person as a microcosm of the universe. Only a doctrine that explained the salvation of the human soul in terms of the origin and purpose of the created world of which it was a part would satisfy them.<sup>53</sup>

Before proceeding, again it is worth while being clear that, if Irenaeus did see κόσμος as μακράνθρωπος, this would not have been in a pantheistic sense, equating Jesus Christ with that μακράνθρωπος. Instead, the relationship is one of marriage between two beings, that which contains and that which is contained.

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<sup>53</sup> Brown, P., *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 106

### The Cause of the Incarnation

Continuing our examination of the inclination in Irenaeus' chronology towards incarnation – or, to use the bishop's own words, why the Beginning should come at the end – we arrive at the notorious question: *Utrum Christus venisset, si Adam non peccasset?* Chided as the sort of barren conjecture that could only flow from the pen of a *Doctor Subtilis*, all too often the question has been forcibly confined by historical and theological commentators to the most musty corners of scholastic fantasy. And, indeed, it is true that Irenaeus neither directly asks nor answers what was to become such a favourite chestnut (significantly, neither does he ever even pose the *Cur Deus homo* question directly). Instead he seems to put an end to any such speculation in stating that 'if the flesh did not need to be saved, the word of God would by no means have been made flesh.'<sup>54</sup> But, despite the speculative air in the phraseology of the question, it need not engage solely with the abstractions of an *ordo decretorum Dei*, but can deal with matters as profound as the very purpose and unity of the οἰκονομία. In particular, it focuses the question of whether the incarnation was intrinsic to that venture or the response to some factor external to God's eternal being, such as sin. To what extent is the disposition towards incarnation original and essential? Is incarnation essentially revelatory or providential? Furthermore, it is by no means clear that Irenaeus did seek to close down such avenues of investigation. Not only would such a conclusion have a traduced understanding of Irenaeus' vision of what it might mean to 'be saved', but also the above citation seems to be a potentially misleading translation of *Si enim non haberet caro salvari, nequaquam Verbum Dei caro factum esset*, a similar sentiment to which is expressed two chapters earlier in the argument:

For what was His object in healing portions of the flesh, and restoring them to their original condition (*pristinum characterem*), if those parts which had been healed by Him were not in a position to obtain salvation?... Or how can they maintain that the flesh is incapable of receiving the life which flows from Him, when it received healing from Him?<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> AH 5.14.1

<sup>55</sup> AH 5.12.6; cf. 5.13.4

In fact, the scales seem to tip decidedly in the opposite direction, in favour of a positive answer to the question, when he writes of 'the fullness of time, at which the Son of God *had to* become the Son of Man.'<sup>56</sup> Should we dare commit the historiographical sin of labelling Irenaeus a Scotist before time?

On this, perhaps superficial level (and, importantly, not with regard to what for Scotus was the related issue of the *donum superadditum* of the *iustitia originalis*), it seems we should certainly run close to doing so. The context within which the entire relationship between God and humanity is set is one of freedom. In contrast to the ontological determinism of the Gnostics, Irenaeus sets out the centrality of freedom to the identity of man such that God, in his love, can woo humanity into relationship with himself. Only in such a context of freedom could genuine communion with and trust in God be possible for man.<sup>57</sup> It would be easy then to say that Adam, in his childlike immaturity, fell easily, succumbing to Satan's offer of a γνῶσις that had never been his to give. Certainly there is some truth to this.<sup>58</sup> However, on its own this view would be savagely procrustean in failing to set the fall into the broader context of the οἰκονομία as a whole: the fall is seen by Irenaeus as more than mere childish error – even *felix culpa*.<sup>59</sup> It must not be imagined, as we have stated above, that thus Irenaeus is proto-Darwinian in the sense that he collapses fall into creation, so naturalising sin and death, nor that he is giving a hostage to Hegel or Teilhard de Chardin's model of *Christus Evolutor*.<sup>60</sup> That would be to confuse an equation of creation and fall with a necessary linking of the two under the one same project (as well as constituting a failure to

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<sup>56</sup> AH 3.16.7

<sup>57</sup> AH 4.37-9

<sup>58</sup> AH 3.23.5; 4.pre.4; 5.16.2; cf. 4.9.2; 5.2.3; 5.5f.

<sup>59</sup> The hazardous apophthegm is derived from the liturgical formula of the (possibly fourth century) *Praeconium*, better known as the *Exultet* (the word with which it opens), in the Roman Missal's Easter Even Vigil, sung in the rite of blessing the paschal candle:

*O certe necessarium Adae peccatum  
quod Christe morte deletum est!  
O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum  
meruit habere Redemptorem.*

Arthur Lovejoy has catalogued the history of the liturgy, citing the most explicit exponents of the doctrine it espouses, including Ambrose, Augustine, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great (for Aquinas' view, cf. *S. Th.* III.1.3 *ad 3 in fin.*), John Wycliffe, John Donne, John Milton, Francis de Sales and Du Bartas, not to mention the popular forms such as hymns in which it was proposed. For instance, the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century English carol 'Adam Lay Ybounden':

|                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ne had the apple taken been, | Blessed be the time      |
| The apple taken been,        | That apple taken was.    |
| Ne had never our lady        | Therefore we moun singen |
| A-been heavene queen.        | Deo gracias!             |

(Lovejoy, A. O., 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall' in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 277-95)

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Moltmann, J., *The Way of Jesus Christ* trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1990), 292-302



perceive that the οἰκονομία is not operating from within what we now call creation's 'natural laws', but in and through the freedom of the Holy Spirit). Quite emphatically, sin is an alien, parasitic intrusion into the good creation, and it is Satan alone who is the *agent provocateur* of the fall.<sup>61</sup> Yet it is to a great extent the very strength of this position that repeatedly forces him back to the question of why the creation was originally only good, and not perfect.<sup>62</sup> His answer flows largely from his understanding of Pauline theology as expressed in the apostle's letter to the Romans; first, that τῇ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἑκοῦσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι ὅτι καὶ αὕτη ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ (Romans 8:20-1); then, that συνέκλεισεν ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπείθειαν, ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ (Romans 11:32).<sup>63</sup> So he can state that

it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>64</sup>

Earlier, in Book 3, Irenaeus has made clear in what sense this is the case, that God allowed the apparent victory of Satan in the fall in full knowledge of the fact that that victory was only pyrrhic, allowing and preparing the way for the true and final victory of the Word. Because of that primal tragedy, the shadows of the good creation would ultimately be expelled in the cross. God appointed this whole plan, including the swallowing of man by 'the author of transgression,' just as he appointed (προσέταξεν, Jon. 2:1, LXX) the fish for Jonah:

Long-suffering therefore was God, when man became a defaulter, as foreseeing that victory which should be granted to him through the Word.... For as He appointed Jonah to be swallowed by the fish (*cetus*), not that he should be swallowed up and perish altogether, but that, having been cast out again, he might be the more subject to God, and might glorify Him the more

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. AH 3.23.1-3; Dem. 16

<sup>62</sup> AH 3.20.1-2; 4.37-9

<sup>63</sup> AH 5.32.1; 1.10.3

<sup>64</sup> AH 4.38.4

who had conferred upon him such an un hoped-for deliverance... so also, from the beginning, did God appoint man to be swallowed up by the fish, who was the author of transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed; but, arranging and preparing the plan of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word.<sup>65</sup>

Death, therefore, is never viewed by Irenaeus as a final and absolute evil. God having 'appointed', 'arranged' and 'prepared' the plan of salvation whereby Christ the man alone would ascend back up the garden mount to take from the tree of life, it seems he is quite unable to imagine Adam not taking from the other tree and being inflicted with death, for he could not envisage such a thing as immortality outside Christ. Yet there is also a more positive side to that curse. The death that was inflicted on Adam in view of his sin was ultimately a merciful punishment, a painful therapy in two senses in particular.

First, death would prescribe a boundary to sin and an end to the evil that now inhered the flesh of Adam. It is man, and not his sin, that God seeks to make immortal. By this means man, freed through resurrection, might begin to live to God in grateful and willing communion.<sup>66</sup> This would be the beginning of the 'lifting up' of man, to use the Johannine language that was so much Irenaeus' native tongue. Panayiotis Nellas, commenting on this theme in patristic thinking more generally, explains that under this model, 'by death is put to death not man but the corruption which clothes him. Death destroys the prison of life-in-corruption, and man, by abandoning to corruption what he received from it, is liberated through death.'<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, death 'becomes the means by which the human body penetrates into the interior of the earth, reaching the inmost parts of creation' such that the very creation, groaning under the tyranny of death and sin, will be resurrected as the earth, which holds the bodies of men, is resurrected.<sup>68</sup> The promise of man's return to the dust from whence he came is hope for that very dust: a promise of the destruction of its weakness in death and cosmic resurrection. Through man, the creation is subjected to frustration in hope. It is

<sup>65</sup> AH 3.20.1; cf. Isa. 27:1; Behr, J., *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York: OUP, 2000), 48, n. 49.

<sup>66</sup> AH 3.23.1, 6; 3.26.6; cf. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycus*, 2.26; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration* 45, 8; *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 12; Methodius of Olympus, *On the Resurrection of the Dead* 1.38-41; *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Nellas, P., *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person* trans. by Russell, N. (Crestwood, New York: SVS, 1997), 64

<sup>68</sup> Nellas, 65; cf. AH 3.23.6; Rom 8:19-23

for this reason that Irenaeus is quick to point out that not only was Jesus Christ united to all the creation he eternally contains in his assumption of flesh, but further united to it in his death: 'the wood has been joined on to the iron, and has thus cleansed His land because the Word, having been firmly united to flesh, and in its mechanism fixed with pins, has reclaimed the savage earth.'<sup>69</sup>

Second, death itself functions as a παιδαγωγός.<sup>70</sup> Under its tuition, man learns that life is not inherent to his being as it is to God's; and so he grows in γνώσις. Having received the knowledge of good and evil, now he may choose more wisely and appreciate both the evil from which he is spared and the good for which he is kept. Knowing experientially for himself what is good and what is evil, man can live in genuine gratitude, praising God with all sincerity, loving much because he has been forgiven much (Luke 7:42-7).<sup>71</sup>

What, then, does Irenaeus make of evil? Given that in many ways the Gnosticism that he sought to oppose was simply a theodicy (meaning that its revival today is hardly surprising), in that it attempted to explain the existence of evil without implicating the supreme God, could it be said that Irenaeus was doing little more than seeking to provide a non-dualist alternative, especially motivated by the situation in Lugdunum? If so, Irenaeus was decidedly successful in distinguishing his alternative, for in place of the Gnostic story of creation as a tragedy, Irenaeus saw a comedy. Yet still, what does Irenaeus make of evil?

On the one hand, Wingren shrewdly notes a tendency in Irenaeian studies

to regard the opposition to God as a *fiction*, as though the whole thing were a theatrical performance: the play must, of course, be put on, but in actual fact nothing is changed, and the real condition of the universe is the same before the beginning of the performance as it is at the end. Such an interpretation of Irenaeus would mean also that man transcends time.<sup>72</sup>

We might add that such a reading would also ignore the essential themes of maturation and augmentation. Rather, it is through death that comes resurrection.

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<sup>69</sup> AH 4.34.4

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycus*, 2.26; Methodius of Olympus, *On the Resurrection of the Dead* 1.38-41; *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, 2; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, 8; *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 12

<sup>71</sup> AH 3.20.2

<sup>72</sup> Wingren, 42



On the other hand, there is the problem of the supreme antinomy of the *felix culpa*. Given the number of moral and metaphysical pitfalls that surround the suggestion that we might rejoice, rather than lament the fall, it is unsurprising that the language of mystery and a history of non-commitment clusters here.<sup>73</sup> The desire to justify the goal of the economy all too easily justifies evil itself as an integral cog to the machine, allowing sin so that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1-2).<sup>74</sup> Yet Irenaeus is unequivocal in his description of sin (with death) as, for all its real evil, the *conditio sine qua non* of improvement. That being the case, the bishop finds himself press-ganged time and again into the service of those who would downgrade either the fall itself, the culpability of man in his sin, or the punishment of God. For instance, Jean Delumeau, concluding his magisterial study of the history of paradise, turns briefly to Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus who, he feels,

do not see the beginning of human history as marked by the anger of a God who punishes.... But science and the only Christian theology that is acceptable today agree with Theophilus and Irenaeus in not assigning an excessive guilt to the stammering human race that first came on the scene.

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<sup>73</sup> Marguerite Shuster is a most recent case in point (Shuster, M., *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004)). Unsurprisingly, it is often left to fictional characters, safe in their non-existence, to espouse the paradox. So Milton, who confesses his *Paradise Lost* to be a theodicy, seeking 'to justify the ways of God to men' (Bk. I, l. 26), has his Adam, on hearing from the Archangel Michael of the redemption that must follow his fall, reply:

'O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense,  
That all this good of evil shall produce,  
And evil turn to good – more wonderful  
Than that which by creation first brought forth  
Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,  
Whether I should repent me now of sin  
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice  
Much more that much more good thereof shall spring –  
To God more glory, more good-will to men  
From God – and over wrath grace shall abound.' (Bk. 12, l. 469-78)

Still though, Adam remains 'full of doubt' as to the appropriate response, even if Milton's readers are left with none. We turn again to J. R. R. Tolkien who, as a Roman Catholic, was unabashed in his orthodox presentment of an other-worldly equivalent. When the Lucifer-figure of Melkor begins to know and act outside of the stipulated musical theme of the divine Ilúvatar, Ilúvatar responds that 'no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.' (Tolkien, 6)

<sup>74</sup> A classic formulation of the objection to such synthesising of evil can be seen in Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov: 'Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature... and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions?' (Dostoyevsky, F., *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Garnett, C. (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 291) cf. Shuster, M., *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 90ff.). Stendhal's 'protest atheism' is the conclusion: 'The only excuse for God is that he does not exist'.

Thus, Delumeau feels, Irenaeus helps us to be rid of what he calls the 'repulsive image of a vengeful God'.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, however thin the ice may have worn under his feet (the doctrine is notoriously precarious), Irenaeus never himself slipped into synthesising evil. As he wrote in Lugdunum in the wake of the persecutions of 177 (for the brutality of which it is worth consulting Eusebius<sup>76</sup>), he could not so detach himself from the reality of suffering as to blithely imagine the fallen creation to be Leibniz's or Rousseau's 'best of all possible worlds'. Not yet. The pain that allows growth and appreciation is real and tragic pain. Evil is truly evil, and not covertly good. The very real pain of the experience of man's growth is in no way meant to be diminished by the ultimate optimism of the vision, but functions to heighten the final appreciation of the goal, just as the experience of good is heightened and defined by the knowledge of its corresponding evil, and just as one must be hungry to appreciate food.<sup>77</sup> In effect, Irenaeus saw that granting Luther's point that even the Devil himself is God's Devil is the only option left available by God's being *χωρὼν καὶ ἀχώρητος*, the only option to avoid the metaphysical dualism of Gnosticism. That God contains all things does not relativise those things in any other sense than to deny their absoluteness.<sup>78</sup> Yet in the end God does contain all things, and so, without in any way toying with what is contained, what is meant there for evil, God can mean for good (Gen. 50:20).

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<sup>75</sup> Delumeau, J., *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 233. Delumeau is a particularly outspoken example. However, what, perhaps, is now the classic example of such use of Irenaeus is John Hick's much critiqued 'Irenaean type of theodicy' (cf. *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd edn., (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977); for such critiques, see Farrow, 74ff.; Surin, K., *Theology and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 15ff.; Russell, J. B., *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 82, n. 10). Hick espouses a *felix culpa* model which envisages evil and pain as the necessary instruments of what he sees to be the overall purpose of the world, which is the process of 'soul-making'. This phrase he lifts from a letter of John Keats in which the poet says 'The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is "a vale of tears" from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven. What a little circumscribed straightened notion! Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making".... Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and to make it a Soul?' (*The Letters of John Keats*, ed. M. B. Forman (London: OUP, 1952), 334-5, cited in Hick, 250, n. 1). For all his covert dependence on Schleiermacher rather than Irenaeus, it has to be said that Hick had got closer to the heart of Irenaeus than has Delumeau.

<sup>76</sup> *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1

<sup>77</sup> *AH* 4.37.7 (citing Jer. 2:19); 4.39.1

<sup>78</sup> Pannenberg elaborates on this spatial dynamic and, combining it with something very much like Irenaeus' conception of the inherent imperfection of what is (newly) created, gives what sounds like an authentically Irenaean aetiology of evil: 'Like pain and suffering, evil is possible because of the finitude of existence, and especially of living creatures that seek to maintain themselves autonomously and thus incline to aim at a radical independence.' (Pannenberg, 172)



It seems, then, that Irenaeus would have given a heartfelt Yes to the question *Utrum Christus venisset, si Adam non peccasset?* He could never have allowed incarnation to be relegated to the status of mere consequence of the fall. That would be to concede the very πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου to a Gnostic doctrine of creation and to assume a goal for creation other than the Spiritual Sons who require death to allow for the change of resurrection from being ψυχικός to becoming πνευματικός.

Moreover, if there is any truth in Rahner's somewhat exaggerated claim that

among theologians since Augustine (contrary to the tradition preceding him) it has been more or less agreed that each of the divine persons (if it were freely willed by God) could become man and that the incarnation of the second person in particular throws no light on the special character of *this* person within the divine nature<sup>79</sup>

then that is most certainly an agreement that runs contrary to the position, if not any tradition, of Irenaeus. His understanding of Jesus Christ as, eternally, the *Homo humanus* that is the Εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ runs entirely contrary to such an agreement. As such, incarnation simply could not be viewed as an episodic anomaly to be inserted at any point within the Divine being. As Irenaeus himself put it: 'in every respect, too, He is Man... and thus (*ergo*) He took up man into Himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible'.<sup>80</sup>

With this, we begin to be given an answer to the question of how this novelty of incarnation could be a true expression of the Son's eternal being. Flesh, far from being the veil to hide all spiritual and divine reality, is the very stage of revelation. 'Revealed in flesh the Godhead see.' We need to be quite clear on this point, for Irenaeus is being highly specific: the medium of the revelation of God's Word is visible form.<sup>81</sup> However, that form is not general. Even John Behr fails to recognise the necessary specificity of the form of revelation: quite correctly, he writes of that which is visible about the Father, 'the Son, *in* whose human nature, rather than behind it, we can see the invisible Father.'<sup>82</sup> Yet he errs when he proceeds to suggest that the 'revelation of the

<sup>79</sup> Rahner, K., 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"', in *Theological Investigations IV* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 80

<sup>80</sup> *AH* 3.16.6; cf. 3.20.2

<sup>81</sup> *AH* 2.34.1

<sup>82</sup> Behr, J., 'The Word of God in the Second Century' *Pro Ecclesia* IX, 1 (2000), 96; cf. *AH* 4.6.6-7; Heb. 11:27; Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Tim. 2:5.



Word is an embodiment of the Word'.<sup>83</sup> This is simply to confuse σάρκωσις with σωματοποίησης, a vital distinction Irenaeus never confounds. Revelation – becoming visible and comprehensible to those who live on earth – is not coterminous with appearance. As we have seen above in chapter one, the Word had already appeared bodily to men and women of faith and unbelief throughout the ages before the incarnation (though, even there, Irenaeus never allows that any special σωματοποίησης ever took place). Yet such appearances are not equated with incarnation as moments of definitive revelation.<sup>84</sup> For the revelation of the Word of God to creation, the substance of creation had to be assumed. Only then could reality be summarised in the 'concise word' (λόγον συντετμημένον) of that flesh.<sup>85</sup>

That said, there needs to be a more essential reason why flesh should be quite so apposite a medium for that revelation. Something of this can be seen in the intentionally chiasmic dynamic of Irenaeus' thought, a dynamic which can be seen in his comparison of the Word's ordering of the cosmos and crucifixion:

And since He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses its length and breadth and height and depth – for by the Word of God the whole universe is ordered and disposed – so too was the Son of God crucified in these, inscribed crosswise upon it all; for it is right that He being made visible, should set upon all things visible the sharing of His cross, that He might show His operation on visible things through a visible form. For He it is who illuminates the height, that is the heavens; and encompasses the deep which is beneath the earth; and stretches and spreads out the length from east to west; and steers across the breadth of north and south; summoning all that are scattered in every quarter to the knowledge of the Father.<sup>86</sup>

Here is his understanding of some of what it might mean for God not to deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13): just as the fourfold nature of the gospel witness is an inevitable and ontological necessity, so too is the incarnation, crucifixion and glorification of the Word that allows for the salvation of the gentiles and the entire cosmos that the Word

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<sup>83</sup> Behr, 105

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *AH* 4.26.1; Jer. 17:9, LXX

<sup>85</sup> *Dem.* 87; cf. *AH* 4.33.4; Isa. 10:23; Rom. 9:28

<sup>86</sup> *Dem.* 34

orders.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it is more than simply appropriate that the one who is eternally Jesus (human) Christ (anointed) should take flesh and be baptised by the hovering creator Spirit. It does not amount to the unnatural breaking and entering of a divine being from one of the eternal, superluminary spheres into the temporal arena of the subluminary (a paradoxical action that would fit better within Newton's space as a container model<sup>88</sup>). Nor should this be understood to be a cheap recasting of Gnostic mythology, for the crucial difference remains that it is the one Lord Jesus Christ that is both the Word sustaining all things and the one crucified amongst those things. Incarnation, whilst involving a genuine addition to his being, is not seen by Irenaeus as something entirely alien to the Son, but precisely an expression of his eternal being. As the ἀρχή, he is the ἀρχή of his own flesh, and then of all contingent reality.

Under this chronology, Irenaeus shows that the 'two hands' of God that mediate creation are not, in themselves, sufficient to mediate that other found in creation in the sense that Irenaeus would understand that mediation. The Spirit-anointed Word must take to himself, and be sustained by, that creation in the union of incarnation.<sup>89</sup> Only then, when God contains man the microcosm, can God fully begin to be χωρῶν καὶ αχώρητος – all in all.<sup>90</sup>

Taking up the language of necessity found in the New Testament (Jesus, for example, needing to become 'lower than angels' in order to be 'crowned with glory and honour' and being loved by the Father because he lays down his life to take it up again<sup>91</sup>), he is able to find the root of this necessity in the very nature of God. As he couches it, as the fashioning of man is the work of God, and 'inasmuch as He had a pre-existence as a saving Being, it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence, in order that the Being who saves should not exist in vain.'<sup>92</sup> Repeatedly he seeks to reinforce the fact that this vision of necessity in no way implies a weakness or fault within God – who, throughout the second century, is almost unquestioningly accepted and presented without qualification as οὐδὲ προσδεόμενός τινος – in the way that creation emanated necessarily from a fault within the Πλήρωμα. 'For not alone antecedently to Adam, but also before all creation, the Word glorified

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<sup>87</sup> AH 3.11.8-9

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Torrance, T. F., *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 37ff.

<sup>89</sup> AH 3.16.3

<sup>90</sup> AH 5.18.3; 5.36.3

<sup>91</sup> Heb. 2:9; Jn. 10:17

<sup>92</sup> AH 3.22.3; cf. 5.15.2

His Father, remaining in Him; and was Himself glorified by the Father.’<sup>93</sup> Rather, it is the ecstatic nature of love that makes the πλήρωσις of Man, accomplished in the incarnation, so necessary.

What we have seen, then, is that whilst Irenaeus deems it of capital importance to see a distinction between the λόγος ἄσαρκος and the λόγος ἑνσαρκος, he cannot accept that there be any radical disjuncture between the two. Robert Jenson, whilst then proceeding in a direction alien to that of Irenaeus, is here quite right in stating that ‘[w]hat in eternity precedes the Son’s birth to Mary is not an unincarnate *state* of the Son, but a pattern of movement within the event of the Incarnation, the movement to Incarnation, as itself a pattern of God’s triune life.’<sup>94</sup> By very nature the λόγος ἄσαρκος is ‘Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel’. The fulfilment of that pleasure is τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, the ἀρχή at the τέλος.

In his chronology, then, Irenaeus provided something considerably more substantial than mere retort. Where the Gnostics were driven by their dualism into the sort of subjectivism that later manifested itself in theological cosmologies as the *distentio animi* that fails to give any serious weight to cosmology, Irenaeus saw that time, as the form of the οἰκονομία θεοῦ, is by its very nature Christologically determined and shaped.<sup>95</sup> The first event of all is the eternal loving of the Son by the Father in the Spirit, by which the Son has his being and by which God becomes creative. So the matrix of creation is established. Yet he does not abandon his creation at this point, as the Gnostics would plead, for the very purpose of heaven and earth is τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, when God and the creation could be united to exist in that harmony which is the characteristic of the love of the Father for the Son. Time in creation, then, is the locus required by childish humanity to grow as a dependent other. To paraphrase the apostle Paul, time, for Irenaeus, is a παιδαγωγός to lead man, little by little, to that glorious maturity.

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<sup>93</sup> AH 4.14.1; cf. 4.13.4

<sup>94</sup> Jenson, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1, 141

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, P., *Time and Narrative*, trans. Blamey, K., & Pellauer, D., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Vol. 3, p12f.



**PART II:**

**BARTH**

## 4

## Who is Man?

## Pioneering a New Anthropology?

Other than perhaps the appeal of somehow ‘book-ending’ the Church’s thought on the question of theological anthropology with sturdy theologians from the second and twentieth centuries, it may appear to be an unwarranted leap of quantum proportions to shift the focus of study from the second century apologetics of Irenaeus to the twentieth century dogmatics of Karl Barth. Quite apart from skipping over eighteen centuries, Basle is not the most obvious first port of call after Lyon. The whole bias of Barth’s thought is often taken to weigh against his producing anything other than an essentially negative anthropology, a thoroughly defaced *imago Dei*, revealing an interpretation of ‘the glory of God’ very different from Irenaeus’ ‘living man’. Certainly this line of interpretation, judging Barth’s later work in terms of his earlier dialectical theology and, classically, his debate with Brunner, continues today, despite a growing body of literature that declaims to the contrary.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, it is Emil Brunner who stands at the head of this body, having described Barth’s part-volume dedicated to anthropology (III/2) as ‘the culmination so far of the whole powerful work.... It is of all Barth’s works his most human’.<sup>2</sup> Even so, Basle seems to remain a far cry from Lyon. Barth himself felt that, at the time of writing, his anthropology necessarily stood on its own in that he believed it to employ an entirely novel methodology. As he wrote in the preface to that part-volume:

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of the former, see Niebuhr, R., *Essays in Applied Christianity*, ed. Robertson, D. B., (New York: Meridian, 1959); Willis, R. E., *The Ethics of Karl Barth* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Lovin, R., *Christian Faith and Public Choices: The Social Ethics of Barth, Brunner and Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). For examples of the latter, see Hunsinger, G., *Karl Barth and Radical Politics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); McLean, S., *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981); Price, D. J., *Karl Barth’s Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, E., ‘The New Barth: Observations on Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Man’, trans. Campbell, J. C., in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4/2 (1951), 123, quoting Prenter, 135. The constraints of the thesis have meant that it has been necessary to focus attention on CD III/2, which constitutes the core of Barth’s examination of anthropology, and to refer to relevant passages from elsewhere in the Barth corpus in relation to that. Further study of Barth’s thinking on humanity would benefit from closer analysis of his doctrine of reconciliation and, in particular, his ethical thinking, in that it displays his appreciation of human action (cf., for example, his *Ethics*, ed. D. Braun; trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981); CD chapters VIII (II/2) and XII (III/4); *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); also Webster, J. B., *Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *Barth’s Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth’s Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1998)).

The reader will soon realise that at this point the exposition deviates even more widely from dogmatic tradition than in the doctrine of predestination in II.2. None of the older or more recent fathers known to me was ready to take the way to a theological knowledge of man which I regard as the only possible one.... In this book, then, few references will be found to their works.<sup>3</sup>

Whether he would have been heartened to know it or not, our study up to this point would seem to show that this could be, tragically, throwing a father such as Irenaeus out with the bathwater. For there is in reality a good deal of overlap between the anthropologies of Barth and Irenaeus, particularly at the point of method. In much the same way as Irenaeus had opposed the Delphic methodology of Gnostic anthropology, as he approaches the question of man Barth seeks to be consistent with his overall dogmatic scheme, 'christologically determined as a whole and in all its parts'.<sup>4</sup> Thus '[w]ho and what man is, is no less specifically and emphatically declared by the Word of God than who and what God is.'<sup>5</sup> *Per definitionem*, Christological thinking serves as the foundation for all other theological thinking, including theological anthropology, and cannot simply be built in at a later stage of construction. To start with any other decision, even if we were to imagine we could find it in scripture, would be unacceptable, since scripture gives just the one foundation of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of man, then, like the larger doctrine of creation, is not prolegomenal or pre-theological, but resides within the domain of dogmatics. If, then, theological anthropology is to have an *a priori* – as in fact all anthropologies do have – ostensibly it is to be the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ. As Barth sees the doctrine of creation as a whole as the first article of faith, so too he sees anthropology, being a subset of the doctrine of creation, as also to be a matter to be understood by faith. The question of who and what man is cannot, on such a presupposition, be answered by reflection on the observable phenomena of what we feel to be 'human'. To assume that it can is to make the fundamental mistake of Adam, equating himself with God and so assuming that he might regard himself as the presupposition of his own being. Human nature as such does not possess the capacity in itself for becoming the human nature of

<sup>3</sup> Barth, K., *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, part 2: *The Doctrine of Creation* eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. H. Knight et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), ix (hereafter CD III/2). Cf. Berkouwer, G. C., *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 90, n. 50.

<sup>4</sup> CD I/2, 123

<sup>5</sup> CD III/2, 13; cf. I/1, 242



Jesus Christ, which is the place of divine revelation, and so, from the sanctifying and so separating virgin birth on, Jesus Christ is then to be the σκάνδαλον to all speculative or scientific anthropologies.<sup>6</sup>

At the outset, Barth seeks to make it clear that, cloaked in his sin, man is in reality *homo absconditus*, hidden man. Consequently, man cannot be both his own teacher and student.<sup>7</sup> How, Barth asks,

can we possibly reach a doctrine of man in the sense of a doctrine of his creaturely essence, of his human nature as such? For what we recognise to be human nature is nothing other than the disgrace which covers his nature, his inhumanity, perversion and corruption.<sup>8</sup>

Despite being the object of divine grace in creation, sin causes man to be worse than a cracked mirror to himself. It places an immovable ceiling on the efforts of man to understand his true being. As the *homo in se incurvatus*, man is unable to see himself. The very grace that man receives is not natural, but a gift. All introspective or Socratic quests for the being of this man thus necessarily deal not with his reality, but merely with appearance and phenomena (at best).<sup>9</sup> This is not to deny the importance of such phenomena or the sciences that observe them, for such observation may provide useful information for man. It is to deny that they provide real information about the true being of man as such. It is to recognise phenomena as only that and so to set a boundary around the proper role of science. So far he can agree with Kant: such phenomena cannot amount to a determination of the real nature of man.<sup>10</sup> After all, on the basis of such self-assessment, how can man divine the difference between what is average among men and what is normative for man? Later Barth proceeds to demonstrate systematically that this is indeed the case with the four major anthropological approaches of the modern period: those of naturalism, idealism, existentialism and even theism. (This, of course, he does with characteristically wry humour, lamenting, for example, the failure of the apologists of naturalism in their

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<sup>6</sup> CD I/2, 188

<sup>7</sup> CD III/2, 22

<sup>8</sup> CD III/2, 27

<sup>9</sup> CD III/2, 24-5; cf. CD I/1, 36.

<sup>10</sup> It does not seem entirely inappropriate to apply retrospectively the language of Thomas Kuhn here, for Barth was insisting that science, relying as it does upon perspectival judgements, must yield to theological interrogation. To resort to introspection, then, in an attempt to discern man's real being, is simply to operate within the wrong paradigm. To reach his goal, the scientist must undergo a paradigm shift that involves the displacement of introspection with the new paradigm of revelation.

attempt to define the characteristics that make man unique to mention that man is apparently the only being accustomed to laugh and smoke!<sup>11</sup>) He does feel that naturalist anthropologies inevitably end up pointing beyond themselves, since in the very act of self-assessment man reveals himself to be capable of degrees of self-transcendence. However, they cannot be pointing clearly as helpful signs in themselves. These attempts to define man immanently may describe real aspects of man, but such descriptions as they produce will be only that. They cannot be descriptions of anything more than dimensions of man. They cannot be descriptions of man as such. We do not and can not know man as the man of the kingdom of glory, as he was created in his original state, for we only see ourselves as fallen men. Furthermore, as with Irenaeus, he does not see a prelapsarian Adam as an adequate object of study beyond the barrier of sin since neither do we have a direct vision of him, nor do we see in him the being of man fulfilling its original determination.<sup>12</sup> And, as for Irenaeus, 1 Cor 15:45 testifies that Adam is not, like Christ, the πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν, but only a ψυχὴν ζῶσαν through the πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν of God. The true meaning of that original creation of man can only be thus understood through his recreation. The breath of the Creator – and so the true being of man – is only fully manifest in the powerful resurrection of Jesus from the dead by the same divine breath. It is through that resurrection that humanity itself is justified, not just in the sense of being declared righteous, but in the sense too of being affirmed. In the end, all anthropological speculation runs up against a final but invisible barrier that forces it to wander aimlessly in the darkness of ignorance, for so profound is the effect of sin upon man's knowledge of himself that the very fact of sin is itself concealed from man's sight, being revealed only in the divine accusation levelled against him in the Word of God.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> CD III/2, §44.2 'Phenomena of the Human', cf. 83. Barth's demonstration is simply the application, at this point, of his overall approach to the question of the doctrine of creation as a whole. Entering a sphere of study in which he felt less confident, his defence at having taken so unabashedly unscientific an exposition took the form of a growing belief that 'there can be no scientific problems, objections or aids in relation to what Holy Scripture and the Christian Church understand by the divine work of creation.' (CD III/1, ix).

<sup>12</sup> CD I/1, 47; III/2, 28; cf. Barth, K., *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, trans., T. A. Smail (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 75.

<sup>13</sup> CD III/2, 30. Or, as he was later to put it in Volume IV: 'Only when we know Jesus Christ do we really know that man is the man of sin, and what sin is, and what it means for man' (CD IV/1, 389). Wolfhart Pannenberg objects that 'in this approach the Christian assertion of human sinfulness depends for its validity on the decision of faith' such that those who refuse to believe in Christ are ultimately spared the realisation and the reality of the confrontation with the distortion of their human being and destiny (Pannenberg, W., *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 92). Yet whilst Barth will promulgate the ontic, as well as the noetic, derivation of humanity from Christ, Pannenberg has conflated the two. It is not that the Christian assertion of human sinfulness itself

Yet what is impossible with men is possible with God. And it is here that he must take the most decisive leave from Kant. For that quandary cannot be bridged by the categorical imperative or any form of universal or abstract truth, but only by the personal and particular Word of God. If 'by the Word of God we are denied any capacity of our own to recognise our human nature as such, it is the same Word of God which enables us to know it, in a free demonstration of the free grace of God apart from and against our own capacity.'<sup>14</sup> Alienated in his sin, man is in the far country. Then, into the darkness of man's ignorance God shines the light of his revelation, a light that comes to us as an incomparable *Novum*. It is in this revelation we see that man is separated from God but should not be. Here at least he can find agreement with Schleiermacher, that it is by grace that sin itself is shown up for what it is.<sup>15</sup> In all this, Barth holds that he is simply being consistent to the tenets of the Reformed tradition which itself finds yet deeper roots in historical theology. This is the only legitimate fulfilment of the programme: *Credo ut intelligam*.<sup>16</sup> Where he differs from that tradition is in the thoroughgoing nature of his consistency to that programme and his refusal to be distracted into abstract speculation. Thus he feels able to be appreciatively critical of the famous opening paragraphs of Calvin's *Institutes*, in particular Calvin's assertion that without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self:

Calvin's exposition is not intrinsically cogent and satisfying because he does not tell us on what grounds all this is affirmed. Who is the man of whom it may be said that his humanity is explicable only in God, and whose existence can be explained only as a subsisting in God? And on the other hand, who is the God the knowledge of whom is so unconditionally necessary for the knowledge of man? We cannot accept the theses of Calvin unless we transplant them from the empty and rather speculative sphere in which they stand in his thinking, and root them once more in the firm ground of the knowledge of Jesus Christ in which they really grew even in Calvin. But they are correct in themselves and are therefore to be accepted.<sup>17</sup>

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depends for its validity on the decision of faith. Barth is arguing that it is the realisation of human sinfulness that depends on the decision of faith.

<sup>14</sup> CD III/2, 40

<sup>15</sup> CD III/2, 35ff.

<sup>16</sup> CD I/2, 44

<sup>17</sup> CD III/2, 73



It has to be said that for all his refusal to read even the name 'Jesus Christ' as the name of a general abstraction or principle, Barth is not as consistent in practice as he seeks to be in theory. 'Jesus Christ' does at times become a dependent factor, being the source of anthropological knowledge because of certain external qualifications, even resembling a general abstraction.<sup>18</sup> However, this is not yet the place for such a critique.

This then brings us to the heart of the matter: instead of attempting to establish in general what it is to be human and then to go on to interpret the humanity of Christ in particular, Barth sees the man Jesus as the revealing Word of God about and to man, the source of man's knowledge of the nature of man. The exclusive nature of this claim he does not see as a deficiency of theological anthropology. Instead, it is in the very nature of human being to live in encounter, and here in Jesus Christ is the ultimate encounter, a facing up to the very reality of our own being. Perhaps this is the point at which briefly to note the paradox inherent in Barth's own encounter with the culture of his day. It has to be said that in many ways it was his very (apparent) remoteness from praxis that provided his counterbalance for an otherwise hijacked German culture (in, for example, the 'confessing' resistance to Hitler's attempt to appropriate German Christianity). By providing his times with an encounter, as opposed to a mirror, the theologically explicit nature of Barth's thought was able to make him one of the most pertinent and seriously received theologians of his day.

This is not to say that the man Jesus simply mirrors human nature as we know it, allowing us in a rather facile manner merely to deduce anthropology from Christology. 'For although He becomes what we are, He does not do what we do, and so He is not what we are.'<sup>19</sup> The man Jesus Christ is, after all, Emmanuel, God with us (and this is meant in terms of distinction, in some contrast to Irenaeus' doctrine of ἀποθέωσις). More specifically, and here coming into complete agreement with Irenaeus, in the man Jesus human nature exists in such a relationship with God as never has existed or will exist between God and another. This mystery is great: '[t]hat Jesus is utterly unlike us as God and utterly like us as man is the twofold fact which constitutes the whole secret of His person.'<sup>20</sup> Yet there is another mystery that separates out Jesus from other men: the mystery of our sin. These two mysteries are a part of the fact that, in contrast to what we see in humanity as a whole, in him man is

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *CD* III/2, 132

<sup>19</sup> *CD* III/2, 48; cf. *CD* I/2, 151ff.

<sup>20</sup> *CD* III/2, 53; cf. 71

revealed as the covenant-partner of God in his original and uncorrupted form. This difference between the man Jesus and other men is not then, finally, an insuperable dissimilarity but a revelation of real man. Jesus Christ is the only real man for God. Not that other men do not exist, but that they do not accomplish what it means to be a man. We are not man because of sin. That is, we are not, like Jesus, in perfect relationship with God. It is as we study his reality that we see the shadow of our own incomplete or lost reality.<sup>21</sup> Still, for all that, the man Jesus is not a being to which humanity is alien. If we were to conclude that from his distinctness or prototypicality, we have to conclude either that he was the only human being, or that he was not in fact really human being but a different being altogether.

Something more profound than the Heisenberg principle – that the observer is always a part of the field being observed and that the objective world thus already includes the subject – is at work. Yet in some sense we do seem to be operating in Heisenberg's universe here, for we 'cannot really look at Jesus without – in a certain sense through Him – seeing ourselves also.'<sup>22</sup> The difference is that here it is not just a question of epistemology. Having walked through the looking-glass into the strange new world within the bible, Barth believed that he had found there to be no man prior to Christ. There simply was no pre-defined human nature for the Son of God to assume, but instead he defined human nature in his very assumption of it. Thus Jesus Christ is not the mere proper object of anthropological investigation. As the real man it is he, and not Adam, that is the one who brings reality to men. Man's essential and original nature is only typified, but not actually found, in Adam in such a way as that it might come down to us by way of heredity.<sup>23</sup> Jesus Christ is not some lately provided *deus ex machina* for an already existing humanity. He alone is primarily and properly man as God's relation to sinful man is primarily and properly His relation to this man alone, and a relation to the rest of mankind only in Him and through Him.<sup>24</sup> The speaking of the Word not only serves a noetic function in revealing the being of the creature, but has an ontological function in that it also establishes the very being of the creature. There in the man Jesus is God's grace constituting man's being such that we have our human nature as such wholly from Jesus. This ontological factor must of

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<sup>21</sup> Godsey, J. D. (ed.), *Karl Barth's Table Talk*. Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 10 (London & Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), 15

<sup>22</sup> CD III/2, 48

<sup>23</sup> *Christ and Adam*, 39-40

<sup>24</sup> CD III/2, 43

necessity under-gird the noetic, or else real man will never be reached, but only mere phenomena and epiphenomena.

The ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus. So long as we select any other starting point for our study, we shall reach only the phenomena of the human.... In this case we miss the one Archimedean point given us beyond humanity, and therefore the one possibility of discovering the ontological determination of man. Theological anthropology has no choice in this matter. It is not yet or no longer theological anthropology if it tries to pose and answer the question of the true being of man from any other angle. We remember who and what the man Jesus is. As we have seen, He is the one creaturely being in whose existence we have to do immediately and directly with the being of God also.<sup>25</sup>

Anthropology concerns the question of man's being, an ontological determination and relationship to the being of God. It is on precisely this basis that he criticises Brunner for seeing the Word of God as only the noetic, and not primarily the ontic, basis of the being of man.<sup>26</sup> Indeed this is an offence to the proud being of man, as Eberhard Jüngel has pointed out, for, refusing our sole ontological constitution as hearers of the Word, 'ontically we wish to ground ourselves in ourselves. We are ruled by the will to self.'<sup>27</sup>

Elizabeth Frykberg summarises excellently in what sense it is that Barth can come to the understanding of Jesus Christ as man in this primary and proper, ontologically constitutive sense.

Barth first systematically developed his analogical teaching concerning human creation in the image of God in the midst of exegeting Genesis 1:26-7. In that exegesis, he translates the first part of verse 26 from Hebrew into German with the words, "Lasset uns Menschen machen in unserem Urbild nach unserem Vorbild!"<sup>28</sup> *Urbild* means "original image" (or "prototype"), whereas *Vorbild* has the sense of "pattern". In choosing these words over "Abbild" (reflection) and "Nachbild" (copy) for the original Hebrew substantives *zelem* and *demut*,

<sup>25</sup> CD III/2, 132; cf. 58, 150, 244-5

<sup>26</sup> CD III/2, 132

<sup>27</sup> Jüngel, E., *Theological Essays I*. trans., and ed., J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 133

<sup>28</sup> *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, III: *Die Lehre von der Schöpfung*, 1 (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), 222 (hereafter KD III/1).



Barth declares directly and by inference that the *Imago Dei* refers primarily to God and only secondarily to the human being.<sup>29</sup>

To speak in terms of Paul's Adam-Christ parallelism, it is Christ then who is really the first and prototypical real man, the *Urbild* and *Vorbild*, the *imago Dei*. Adam, the one who is really second and typical, the *Abbild* and *Nachbild*, became first, whilst the one who is really first has become second.<sup>30</sup> Far from being a pioneer, so far it looks as though Barth is swimming in distinctly Irenaean waters. Neither Adam nor his race can be the proper object of theological anthropology, whilst the *imago Dei* refers primarily to God, all because it is Jesus Christ that is the substance and revelation of the real being of man. He can even, like Irenaeus, write of the pre-existence of the man Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, his real presence with Israel and the faith of the fathers in him. Thus, just as Irenaeus had done, he could rail against any classic Gnostic-style separation of the eternal Son, the Word or Christ from Jesus, even under and within the Old Testament.

The ascertaining of the first fact, that the Son of God is this man, that the Christ is Jesus, is not to be conceived of as though those who thus thought or spoke had first a definite conception of God or of a Son or Word of God, of a Christ, and then found this conception confirmed and fulfilled in Jesus. That would be an arbitrary Christology, docetic in its estimate and conclusions.<sup>31</sup>

So tangible does he understand this pre-existence of the man Jesus to have been that he is at no point liable to the kind of misunderstandings that Irenaeus' fine distinctions between πνεῦμα, ψυχή, σάρξ, and σῶμα continually produce.

So, in view of the terrible encounter of God and man in the Old Testament, we shall have to say that here, too, we already have the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting. To expect Christ in this full and complete way, as was the case here, means to have Christ

<sup>29</sup> Frykberg, E., *Karl Barth's Theological Anthropology: An Analogical Critique Regarding Gender Relations*. Studies in Reformed Theology and History (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1993), 31

<sup>30</sup> CD III/2, 46, 205

<sup>31</sup> CD I/2, 16

and to have Him fully. The fathers had Christ, the complete Christ. Here, too, naturally, not an idea of Christ, but the incarnate Word, the Christ of history.<sup>32</sup>

It is at this point, though, that despite the assertions of commentators such as Robert Jenson, we begin to see a radical divergence of opinion between Barth and Irenaeus.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *CD* I/2, 93; cf. 73ff; II/2, 354ff.

<sup>33</sup> In addressing the question of pre-existence Jenson describes Irenaeus and Barth almost perfectly mirroring one another in their presentations of the issue. 'Irenaeus of Lyons will here only be mentioned,' he states wisely (any further analysis of the bishop's theology necessarily revealing the disparity between the two), 'although discussion of his remarkable Trinitarian metaphysics could in fact substitute for the following discussion of the other, Karl Barth.' Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 139-140.

### Man as the Creature of the Trinity

The point at which Barth begins to deviate from Irenaeus and so genuinely to start pioneering a new anthropology is over the question of the sense in which we might say Jesus Christ is man. For Irenaeus, as seen above, 'man' could not simply be subsumed under the larger category 'creature'. Creaturely men – and Adam in particular – he saw as types of the divine Man who then himself became a creature in the incarnation. Yet, while never explicitly rejecting this precise position, Barth felt that such Christology (ironically for Irenaeus) would itself fall into the trap of dividing the Christ that no man should put asunder. From Basle, to have a Christ above and behind Jesus of Nazareth looked too much like abstraction and speculation. Whilst both theologians are in agreement that Jesus Christ is the reality and revelation of the true being of man, it is in fact little more than a superficial agreement, given their differing understandings of the significance of 'Jesus Christ'.

G. C. Berkouwer reveals some of the difficulties in coming to terms with this anthropology, given its sheer originality, in his assessment of it:

The undeniable value of many of Barth's anthropological views regarding the Biblical picture of man does give rise to some question regarding the Christological basis of this anthropology. We can put the matter thus: on the one hand, Barth builds his anthropology on Jesus as archetype, *Urbild*, and on God's grace which preserves man's 'essence'; on the other hand, the argument often stresses rather the creaturely dependence of the whole man on God, his Creator.<sup>34</sup>

The novelty of Barth's conception seemed to shield Berkouwer from the realisation that here is no either-or situation, no inconsistency in the new dogmatics. Even as the *Urbild*, the real and primary man, this man can only be spoken of as created 'flesh', as 'the creature'. Indeed, this, rather than 'man', is Barth's choice as title for Chapter X, which constitutes his part-volume on anthropology. Man is only ever the creature. This does not mean that Barth harbours a crypto-Lutheran Christology in which there is a mutually affecting perichoretic relationship between the Word and his flesh (a

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<sup>34</sup> Berkouwer, 94-5



relationship that makes the Word as dependant on the flesh as the flesh is upon the Word). This would be to misunderstand both the novelty of the position and the seriousness with which he conceives man as creature. Nor does it mean that this position should be confused with an abstract Jesus-worship, worshipping the human nature alone, such as in the Protestant pietism of Zinzendorf and the Catholic cult of the sacred Heart of Jesus. This he expressly repudiates on the grounds that the human nature of the Logos is anhypostatic and so has no existence outside of or prior to its union with the Logos.<sup>35</sup> Thus, whilst the gospels do record Jesus' being hungry, thirsty, tired, sad, angry and so on, this 'private life of Jesus' never amounts to an autonomous theme in the New Testament.<sup>36</sup> What it does mean is that every question concerning man which is directed away from Jesus of Nazareth, the human being of Christ, is necessarily and wholly directed away from the real being of man.<sup>37</sup> It is simply the incarnate Word alone, the λόγος ἑνσαρκος, that is God's revelation, the unveiling of the being of both God and man. When Paul or John in his prologue speak of Christ as the Alpha and Omega, the one through whom and for whom all things were made, they wish to speak only of the eternal divine Son or Logos in his unity with the human being Jesus: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life' (1 John 1:1).

The point in time at which this conception began to crystallise in Barth's mind is unclear. What is clear is that in his first effort at dogmatics in the early years in Göttingen in 1924-5, whilst he did hold that the eternal Son could only be known in and through the incarnation, the eternal Son could be spoken of as a being apart from, because prior to, Jesus Christ.

The incarnation of the Son, then, is not an eternal relation like that of the Son to the Father, although it is enclosed by the wisdom of God from all eternity. It is something new, an action like creation. Certainly we know the Son only through the Incarnate, in Jesus Christ, whom the fathers saw in hope. But he is also the Logos of God beyond his union with humanity, just as the Trinity is

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<sup>35</sup> CD I/2, 136-8; Barth, K., *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, ed. H. Reiffen; trans., G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1991), 157

<sup>36</sup> CD III/2, 209

<sup>37</sup> Cf. CD I/2, 166

more than the incarnation. As the Father is not just the Creator, so the Logos is what he is even apart from Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup>

By the time he came to write the *Church Dogmatics* his Christology – and his understanding of the connection between the Logos and the humanity he assumed in particular – does appear to have changed somewhat. Some statements in volume I (the second part-volume in particular) seem quite emphatic: '[i]t is οὗτος, this man, who in the beginning was with God, as we read in Jn. 1<sup>2</sup>. Who is this man? The Logos who became flesh'.<sup>39</sup> Yet there is too much in volume I that militates against so monochrome a reading. Specifically, Barth has not yet delineated the nature of 'becoming'. The result is that certain affirmations are not only ambiguous, but potentially misleading, especially for the unwary. For example:

He is the incarnate Word, i.e., the Word not without the flesh, but the Word in the flesh and through the flesh – but nevertheless the Word and not the flesh. The Word is what he is even before and apart from His being flesh. Even as incarnate He derives His being to all eternity from the Father and from Himself, and not from the flesh.<sup>40</sup>

Without a clear doctrine of time yet in place, in what sense can the 'becoming' of this passage be understood? Eternally? Timelessly? In terms of common, 'linear', chronology? In what sense can there be any 'before and apart from'? The difficulty in grappling with Barth at this point is heightened by yet more clear statements that there was indeed a definite 'becoming' – a change from one mode of being to another. Thus, he writes, the Word 'became Jesus. In so doing He did not cease to be what He was before, but He became what He was not before, a man, this man.'<sup>41</sup> What grounds Barth's thought here (unsurprisingly!) is his conception of revelation. That is, what God is in his being towards us as the incarnate Word, he is eternally and antecedently in his own being as God. Worryingly for what purports to be so christocentric a doctrine of revelation, the precise Christological details may not have been worked out, and yet the inclination of Barth's thought can be clearly seen. The maturity of that

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<sup>38</sup> *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, 155-6

<sup>39</sup> *CD I/2*, 18

<sup>40</sup> *CD I/2*, 136

<sup>41</sup> *CD I/2*, 149

thought can be seen nearly twenty years later, when, in answer to the question 'Does the incarnation make a change in the Trinity?' Barth replied:

No, the incarnation makes no change in the Trinity. In the *eternal decree* of God, Christ is God and man. Do not ever think of the second Person of the Trinity as only *Logos*. That is the mistake of Emil Brunner. There is no *Logos asarkos*, but only *ensarkos*. Brunner thinks of a *Logos asarkos*, and I think this is the reason for his natural theology. The *Logos* becomes an abstract principle. Since there is only and always a *Logos ensarkos*, there is no change in the Trinity, as if a fourth member comes in after the incarnation.<sup>42</sup>

Not only do we see now for the first time a hypostatisation of the assumed flesh (with which, it has to be said, Barth thankfully fails to be consistent), such that any 'becoming' can be imagined to amount to the inclusion of a fully hypostatic fourth member in the Godhead, we also see a pioneering Christology.

In this definition of his mature Christology, as we have seen Jenson do, Barth did turn to Irenaeus as his very first pillar of support in the church.<sup>43</sup> Yet instead of picking up the tradition of Irenaeus, it would be more accurate to say that Barth has effectively inverted Irenaeus' view that to place the birth of, and assumption of flesh by, Jesus Christ in eternity would be to make a speculative judgment about the eternal generation of the Son. For Barth, the real speculation is that of any other generation than the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem! A confusion that we must be careful to avoid (as in dealing with Irenaeus' doctrine of the eternal man) is between Barth's doctrine of the λόγος ἑνσαρκος and the ancient tradition of the *caeleste corpus* found first in Apelles and the Valentinians, then seen in the Paulicians, Hilary of Poitiers, dissidents of the Radical Reformation such as Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons, Caspar Schwenkfeld, Sebastian Franck, Valentin Weigel and Deitrich Philips, as well as individual representatives from both evangelical (Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge) and esoteric (Emanuel Swedenborg) camps.<sup>44</sup> To take Isaac Watts as perhaps the most able and

<sup>42</sup> *Table Talk*, 49

<sup>43</sup> *CD III/1*, 55, citing *AH* 5.18.3 ('For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own'); cf. *CD III/2*, 155.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity* x.18ff. Also Williams, G. H. & Mergal, A. M., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. Library of Christian Classics: Ichthus Edition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 162, 238.



orthodox exponent of the *caeleste corpus* tradition: Watts held that Christ's 'person as God-man existed before the foundation of the world', by which he meant that the Son's human nature 'was formed the first of creatures before the foundation of the world'. Watts was trying, in 'The Arian invited to the Orthodox Faith', to lead those persuaded by the post-Reformation revival of Arianism to belief in the full deity of Christ by 'soft and easy steps'.<sup>45</sup> The problem with 'steps', of course, is that they lead both ways at once, and thus J. A. Dorner declared 'From this view to Arianism was but a short step'.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, despite his (unintended) inversion of much of Irenaeus' anti-Valentinian logic, Barth, like Irenaeus, wholly resisted the temptation to reduce the divine status of the Son of God. Neither was the σάρξ of the λόγος celestial; nor did it, for all its eternal nature, in any way imply the less than fully divine nature of the λόγος. In fact, the very opposite: for Barth, God is God precisely in the flesh. That is his doctrine of revelation: God *is* in Jesus.

Whilst this might raise theological problems about the eternal relationship between the Creator and his creation, it has to be said that Barth's λόγος ἑνσαρκος looks nothing like the formless *Urmensch* of Gnosticism. Rather, the rejection of the 'second person' of the Trinity *per se*, the λόγος ἄσαρκος, is a protest against all formless 'Christ-principles', and a replacement of them with Jesus Christ the Mediator, One who in the eternal sight of God has already taken upon himself our human nature.<sup>47</sup> Any protest that this is, in effect, the construction of an eternal incarnation (and so its own effective etherification) is missing the point. There may be no change in the Trinity in that no new member is admitted. Yet there is still a very real 'becoming' in the choice and so being of Jesus Christ the God-man. As Barth himself responded: 'we have no need to project anything into eternity'.<sup>48</sup> Eberhard Jüngel explains the sense in which this is the case:

This pre-existent being of the man Jesus should not be interpreted as a 'gnoseological' or 'ideal' being. And this being 'does not belong only

<sup>45</sup> Watts, I., 'The Arian invited to the Orthodox Faith' in *The Works of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D. D.* (Leeds: 1813), Vol. VI, 210ff. Philip Doddridge is sometimes bracketed with Watts in discussions of eighteenth century English Arianism: 'there is reason to believe that Christ had before his incarnation a created or derived nature... though we are far from saying he had no other nature' (Doddridge, P., *A Course of Lectures on the Principle Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: 1799), Vol. II, 154).

<sup>46</sup> Dorner, J. A., *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), Vol. II, 331

<sup>47</sup> CD III/1, 54

<sup>48</sup> CD II/2, 98

passively to the *aeterna Dei praedestinatio* [eternal divine predestination]' (CD II/2, 107) as Aquinas taught (STh III.24.1f.). The being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God consists rather in the spoken character of the eternal λόγος: Jesus. And here also it is true that 'he spoke, and it came to be' (Ps. 33.9). In that the electing God has spoken his electing *Yes* to this man, this man is this *Yes*. He is this not (*sic*) *Yes* for himself. For himself he is nothing at all. But he is this *Yes* with God.<sup>49</sup>

We might say that in the man Jesus Christ we are presented with the very antithesis of the supratemporal myth of the Gnostic aeon, whose eternal being was then shadowed or acted out on the stage of history. For in him we do not see the mere sign of some other reality but the reality himself – the *signum* and the *res* in the one person. The human flesh assumed by the Mediator of the covenant is the only temple in which God may be known or glorified or loved or worshipped.<sup>50</sup>

Again, we need to be careful not to mishear Barth on this point. For there is an assertion with which he did not wish to be confused, one that he held up against the so-called *Extra Calvinisticum* of Reformed theology. That is the Lutheran idea of a perichoresis between the Word of God and the human being of Christ, a perichoresis that, he felt, reversed the *enhypostasis* of Christ's human nature such that, in the same way that the humanity only has reality through the Word, so the Word only has reality through the humanity.<sup>51</sup> To this, Reformed theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries responded with an assertion, not against the *totus totus intra carnem* but against the *numquam et nusquam extra carnem*.

They did not want the reality of the λόγος ἄσαρκος abolished or suppressed in the reality of the λόγος ἔνσαρκος. On the contrary, they wished the λόγος ἄσαρκος to be regarded equally seriously as the *terminus a quo*, as the λόγος ἔνσαρκος was regarded as the *terminus ad quem* of the incarnation. And so

<sup>49</sup> Jüngel, E., *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., trans., Webster, J. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 96

<sup>50</sup> Cf. CD II/1, 58; II/2, 58; IV/2, 101. This is important to bear in mind when Barth writes in what could otherwise potentially be construed as mythopoeic language. For instance, in the second part of his section 'The Royal Man' (CD IV/2, §64.3), he describes the royal man as being created 'after God' (κατὰ θεόν) (166) such that the Son of Man copies, represents and reflects the humiliation of the Son of God (167-71, 179ff.; cf. II/2, 413f.). It is not that the Son of Man is the temporal shadow of some other being, namely the eternal Son of God, but that the royal man Jesus is God's faithful and true εἰκὼν, revealing the divine *Yes* spoken to man and the creation as a whole.

<sup>51</sup> CD II/2, 166-71

they wanted to reject that reversal of the *enhypostasis*, by which, it seemed to them, either the divinity or the humanity as such was imperilled.<sup>52</sup>

Not that Barth could entirely agree with them. The Reformed response, he believed, failed to demonstrate that it had not posited a twofold Christ, a λόγος ἑνσαρκος alongside a λόγος ἄσαρκος: 'In short it cannot be denied that the Reformed *totus intra et extra* offers at least as many difficulties as the Lutheran *totus intra*.'<sup>53</sup> His conclusion was that there may in the end be no nice equilibrium between the two, but that the existence of two evangelical theologies in one evangelical Church may reflect the great mystery that ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο.<sup>54</sup> This halting of his between two opinions seems to serve as an early indicator of his overall approach to Christology: that is, he consistently refused to be tied to one idiom, a refusal that enabled him to make, alternately, strongly Alexandrian and strongly Antiochene Christological statements, whilst avoiding an ultimate collapse into Nestorianism or Eutychianism.

The real furnace in which this was forged was the doctrine of God, and, more specifically, the question of election. For Barth, God does not exist behind his revelation of himself, but in it, in his being towards us. What is that being? God's freedom is such that he decides what he will be and so is the one authentic 'I'. Human decisions in their creaturely and sinful weakness have not only the potential but the bias toward remaining ineffectual. In contrast, God's decision is the most historical, effectual, and real of occurrences. So much so, in fact, that God is his own decision.<sup>55</sup> His decision, his covenant decree, is the choosing of Jesus Christ. It is in that act of choosing that Jesus Christ exists. Then, if Jesus Christ the electing God was also to be the elected man, if it is this person, God united with man in one person, who is as such the eternal basis of the whole divine election, then in the eternal decree of God, the Son of God had to be determined as the Son of Man, to be the pre-existing God-man Jesus Christ.<sup>56</sup> The eternal purpose of God is the reality of the divine-human person of Jesus Christ before the existence of all other reality. Jesus Christ, the divine-human person, therefore eternally is.

In his examination of the doctrine of creation Barth elaborates on this, for that covenant decision is the internal basis of creation. That is, in the very same freedom

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<sup>52</sup> CD I/2, 169-70

<sup>53</sup> CD I/2, 170

<sup>54</sup> CD I/2, 171

<sup>55</sup> CD II/1, 265-72

<sup>56</sup> CD II/2, 101ff.; cf. 172; IV/1, 66.



and love with which God eternally begets the Son, he also turns outward as creator to love in freedom – to pronounce his divine ‘Yes’ on that which lies outside his own being and eternity. In the man Jesus, God turns – not because of external compulsion, but out of the inner necessity of his eternal love – *ad extra* such that his relationship with what is other than him might correspond to his own inner, eternal relationship. This actualisation of God’s grace in creation is the answer to the supreme problem for theology, which is not the existence of God but the independent existence of creaturely reality. Creation is God’s temporal externalisation of that which he eternally is in himself.<sup>57</sup> The speaking and hearing of the Word from all eternity thus forms the internal basis of the existence of creation, which is itself the hearer of the Word and one that responds in praise. It is wholly consonant with his nature that God, the eternal speaker of the Word, should be creator. Thus framed, a Christian doctrine of creation effectively escapes the horns of necessity and arbitrariness as the eternal love of the Father for the Son is expressed in the love of God for what is outside his inner being. God’s acts *ad extra* are not strange to his being. To be God for us is not therefore something alien to the being of God. It is grounded in his very being. The God who is the metaphysical Supreme Being, a God alone without man (such as Martin Buber’s ‘wholly other’ God), as opposed to being eternally for man, is a proud being, unable to stoop in humility down to his creature, a God in marked contrast to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Such a God is the devil. It is the perversity of sin that man wishes to be precisely this absolute, solitary, and proud being (self-sufficient, self-serving, self-centred) and not like the humble God.<sup>58</sup>

To put it simply: the love of the Father for the Son, or of God for his Word, is the eternal basis of the creaturely being found primarily in the incarnation and secondarily in creation itself. Incarnation, then, is the embodiment, the external form of the inner reality of the eternal love that is between the Father and the Son. The Trinity is the ontic root of the incarnation as the Word is the ἀρχή of creation. The fellowship between Father and Son thus finds a correspondence in the fellowship between God and his creature. Far from the man Jesus being a copy in the creaturely

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Creation is the temporal analogue, taking place outside God, of that event in God Himself by which God is the Father of the Son. The world is not God’s Son, is not “begotten” of God; but it is *created*. But what God does as the Creator can in the Christian sense only be seen and understood as a reflection, as a shadowing forth of this inner divine relationship between God the Father and the Son.’ (‘God the Creator’ in *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: SCM, 1949), 52) Cf. Colwell, J. E., *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford, 1989), 224-6. Why creation can be seen by Barth to be the specifically temporal analogue and not also the spatial analogue is a question to which we will turn in chapter six.

<sup>58</sup> CD IV/1, 159, 422

world of the eternal Son, his existence is a reflection of the Father and the Son together. It is this

relationship in the inner divine being which is repeated and reflected in God's eternal covenant with man as revealed and operative in time in the humanity of Jesus.... The humanity of Jesus is not merely the repetition and reflection of His divinity, or of God's controlling will; it is the repetition and reflection of God Himself, no more and no less. It is the image of God, the *imago Dei*.<sup>59</sup>

The *imago Dei* is not a state, but the image of a relationship. It is the primary instance of the *analogia relationis*, in which the union of the Father and the Son is seen in the temporal reality of the God-man Jesus Christ. It is dynamic divine love imaged (and, we might say, echoed) forth in the created sphere.

It is the positing of the Word of God as very God and – because of the Father's love for the Son – very man from all eternity and before creation in the counsel of God that is what finally makes creation not only appropriate but necessary. It is this in contrast to any suggestion that God somehow stands in need of some partner other than Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup> The state of creatureliness flows out of the relationship between the Father and the Son (of which the Spirit is the bond, meaning we must not understand the covenant as binitarian and so failing to be the work of the whole being of God). This state stands eternally before God and loved by him in the Son. That God has regard to the Word made flesh is the ratification of the covenant that is then the true and genuine basis of creation.<sup>61</sup>

If the eternal Logos is the Word in which God speaks with Himself, thinks Himself and is conscious of Himself, then in its identity with the man Jesus it is the Word in which God thinks the cosmos, speaks with the cosmos and imparts to the cosmos the consciousness of its God.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> CD III/2, 219. It is this crucial point that is so determinative for his doctrine of reconciliation, for it is this that Barth means when he states that the 'royal man of the New Testament tradition is created "after God" (κατὰ θεόν). This means that as a man He exists analogously to the mode of existence of God.' (CD IV/2, 166, referring to Eph 4:24).

<sup>60</sup> Barth, K., *The Humanity of God* trans., J. N Thomas & T. Wieser (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1960), 50

<sup>61</sup> CD III/1, 51f.; cf. 28f., 49f.; III/2, 18, 137.

<sup>62</sup> CD III/2, 147

Thus Jesus Christ, the Word precisely in his flesh, is the mediator from all eternity, the meaning and motive of all creation. As Jesus Christ is God for God in the divine relationship *ad intra*, so he is God for man in the repetition of that relationship *ad extra*. The man Jesus is to the created world what the Son of God as the eternal Logos is within the triune being of God, for he is human exactly as he actualises himself as the Word of God. Thus the becoming flesh of the Word cannot be conceived as anomalous to his eternal being.<sup>63</sup> The decree of grace that prompts the creative will of God presupposes that the unity and love between the Father and the Son will not be unsettled or disturbed in some sense, but transcendentally glorified by the becoming flesh of the Word and his taking to himself of man's misery. His becoming is his being, and so his becoming like us is not a becoming unlike himself. Whilst being other than himself in his going into the far country as the Son of Man, the Son of God remains utterly himself. For there is within the divine life of God himself a *prius* and a *posterius*, such that the humiliation of the Son is not the slighting but the very affirmation of his divine being and the divine life itself. 'Christ is man, not in contrast to the fact that elsewhere He is termed the Son of God, but because He is the Son of God, and expresses and demonstrates Himself as such in the fact that He is man.'<sup>64</sup> He cannot be the Word of God, communicating God *ad extra* to creation, and therefore be for God, or even be at all, without being for men.<sup>65</sup>

If this has profound implications for the doctrine of creation as a whole, it has yet more for anthropology proper, which is our immediate concern. For the Word of God is concerned with God and man, not with heaven and earth themselves. Therefore, a theological doctrine of creation moves ineluctably towards anthropology, to man in the cosmos, given that the goal and centre of the cosmos is the human reality within it.<sup>66</sup> Barth is asserting that there is no human nature prior to the Son's assumption of it, for he took creatureliness to himself even (so to speak) before it was. Jesus Christ alone is really and originally man – even creaturely man, flesh. As such he, as prototype, both determines and is human nature in a way that no man can avoid. He is not only the root and basis of the covenant of grace planned for man. He is also the root and basis of human nature as such. Other men only share derivatively and

<sup>63</sup> So Hans Frei: 'That God related himself to us means that it was possible, that he must be himself eternally in a way that is congruent with his relating himself to us contingently.' (Frei, H., 'Karl Barth: Theologian' in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, eds. G. Hunsinger and W. C. Placher (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1993), 171)

<sup>64</sup> CD III/2, 46; cf. I/2, 165; IV/1, 200f.

<sup>65</sup> CD III/2, 217

<sup>66</sup> CD III/2, 6ff.



secondarily in a fleshly nature that is properly and primarily his.<sup>67</sup> He is the original, we are the copy. The possibility of a natural anthropology has thus been pre-empted in being denied from all eternity in the very being which is the decision of God.<sup>68</sup>

However, despite the undoubted strength of such an uncompromisingly Jesus-focused anthropology – an anthropology that refuses to tolerate abstraction when speaking of ‘the human nature’ – a number of problems have become clear. There is of course the inevitable danger of sneering at the theological sight of the giant upon whose shoulders we are standing, yet Douglas Farrow’s comment on Barth’s ascension theology might just as well be applied here: ‘[i]n his loyalty to the Man of Nazareth he struck a great blow at the head of the “giant gnostic snake” coiled at the roots of docetic theology, even if in doing so he bruised his own theological heel.’<sup>69</sup>

The first problem is illuminated as the distinction between Barth and Irenaeus, both proponents of Jesus Christ as the original and eternal man, has opened up to shed light on the matter. Barth has integrated the traditionally distinct, if inter-related, aspects of Christology, the being and the activity of Jesus Christ. His work does not stand over and above his person, for he is the reconciliation of God that he performs. Robert Jenson sets out the issue: speaking of Christ as being within himself both the subject and object of the work of God, Jenson sees here the key to Barth’s holding together of the identity of the eternal Son with Jesus of Nazareth (importantly, with terms such as ‘fellowship’).

In classical Christology God works in and through the human nature of Christ as through His own nature. Here God works on the human nature of Christ.... For classical Christology the history of salvation, the history of Christ and His people, is the history between God-in-Christ and mankind. For Barth’s Christology it is the history between God and man as these are present in the

<sup>67</sup> CD III/2, 50; cf. I/2, 44; III/1, 380.

<sup>68</sup> Eberhard Jüngel comments, ‘Barth’s teaching concerning the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God is, indeed, the christological counterpart to the *theologia naturalis* [natural theology] which he radically rejected. Whereas Barth always denied the priority of God’s being in the beginning with humanity in creation over revelation (which is only to be understood christologically), he now teaches, on the basis of the priority of revelation (of covenant) which he always maintained, the being of a man in the beginning with God, which precedes creation: that is, the being of the elect man Jesus. In this, Barth has in some measure christologically surpassed the conception of all natural theology. One can hardly any longer make the charge that Barth’s rejection of any natural theology withheld from humanity the theological significance which is its due.’ (Jüngel, E., *God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., trans., Webster, J. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 97, n. 91)

<sup>69</sup> Farrow, D., *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 254

two natures of Christ. One almost wants to say without qualification: It is the history *between* the two natures of Christ. The classical Christology was concerned with the history made by the one person of the God-man, with the deeds worked by God-in-Christ. Barth's Christology is concerned with the history worked by God on Jesus, "in" Christ.<sup>70</sup>

Yet this deviation from what Jenson calls 'classical Christology' is precisely the problem, and, given the centrality of the dual concept of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* to the inner logic of the whole scheme of God's grace operating in the giving of Jesus Christ for us, a problem that must infect Barth's entire doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>71</sup> Where for Irenaeus it is the personal relationship between the man Jesus Christ and God the Father that is the ontic basis for creation, for Barth it is, in the end, the anhypostatic flesh of the Word as the repetition of that relationship *ad extra*. There can be no I-Thou interpersonal relationship here. Any relationship must be replaced with what must be called an enhypostatic connection. It is understandable then that he should want to hypostatise the flesh of the Word, as seen above and in his use of terms such as 'fellowship'. Yet if it is the anhypostatic flesh itself that, by being loved by the Father before creation, even in the Son, is the internal basis of creation, any 'relationship' with it necessitates a fall into Nestorian Christology of the worst sort. What sort of 'relationship' can God really have with created being on this model? It is imperative to note that this is not a critique of the classical doctrine of the ἐνυπόστατος as Leontius of Byzantium had couched it. For Leontius and John of Damascus, what was enhypostatic was not humanity or human nature in general, but a potential human individual as yet undeveloped into an hypostasis.<sup>72</sup> Barth's innovation is to have made

<sup>70</sup> Jenson, R. W., *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963), 130. 'The actuality of the incarnate Son of God, the union of the two natures in Him, is the direct confrontation of the totality of the divine with the human in the one Jesus Christ.' (CD IV/2, 86; cf. CD III/2, 69ff.)

<sup>71</sup> Barth referred to the formula as a description of 'the sum and root of the grace addressed to Him', that is, the human nature of Jesus Christ (CD IV/2, 91). Bruce McCormack has argued convincingly that Barth's appropriation of the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* formula in 1924 'provided the material conditions needed to set free the elaboration of the analogia fidei', supplanting the time-eternity dialectic 'as the central parable for expressing the *Realdialektik* of God's veiling and unveiling' (McCormack, B. L., *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-36* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 19, 367).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Relton, H. M., *A Study In Christology* (London: SPCK, 1917), chs. 8-9. Building on the challenge laid down to the traditional reading of Leontius by Aloys Grillmeier and Brian Daley, F. LeRon Shults has argued that Barth's appropriation of the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* formula was the result of his readings in Protestant Scholastic, and not patristic, theology. Despite the terminology, Barth's use of the formula cannot, then, be said truly to reflect Leontius' thought. (Schults, F. LeRon, *Reforming*

the humanity of Jesus Christ the ontological foundation (even, at times it seems, the totality) of the being of man.<sup>73</sup> It is when this is put together with the traditional and orthodox doctrine of the ἐνυπόστατος that Leontius' thought is distorted, with consequences never on the map of the late classical Christological debates. The charge that Barth aimed at any (such as Irenaeus) who would divide Christ by postulating a Son prior to Jesus of Nazareth seems to have exploded in his face: either he could do the same himself or admit the lack of any relationship (as opposed to mere connection) between God and his creation.

Furthermore, it does seem in practice that in Jesus' being as the man for other men, his humanity is made dependent on ours. Why else would the Son assume that flesh affected by our sin?<sup>74</sup> The alternative, that, metaphysically, sin is something that should be removed and dealt with in the creaturely realm, simply smacks of conjecture. At times Barth feels able – despite his great fear of speculation – to suggest that some other economy might, in fact, have obtained: '[i]n delivering and fulfilling this first and eternal Word in spite of human sin, as He would in fact have delivered and fulfilled it quite apart from human sin, sin is also met, refuted and removed in time.'<sup>75</sup> Jenson pleads an otherwise plausible defence, that the Son's triumph over sin 'is not the abstract plan of a God who likes to overcome difficulties, but the expression of the absolute primacy of the Crucified and Risen.'<sup>76</sup> Yet this does seem to beg the question, or at least open another one about the chicken and the egg.

Finally, there is the problem of the eternal standing of created being before, with, and even within God. Barth does on occasion show an awareness of how close to the edge of pantheism he is treading. Of the Word made flesh he writes: '[i]n His divinity He is from and to God. In His humanity He is from and to the cosmos. And God is not the cosmos, nor the cosmos God. But His humanity is in the closest correspondence with His divinity. It mirrors and reflects it.'<sup>77</sup> This is perhaps why, at a time when quantum theory was tying time and space together tighter than ever, Barth

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*Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2003), ch. 7 'Anthropology and Christology: The *Anhypostasis-Enhypostasis* Formula')

<sup>73</sup> Thus the history of Jesus Christ, as we shall see in chapter 6, is our history, the history of the reconciliation of the world with God (CD IV/1, 158; 547f.; 630f.; 643f.; IV/2, 270).

<sup>74</sup> CD I/2, 151ff.

<sup>75</sup> CD IV/1, 48

<sup>76</sup> *Alpha and Omega*, 104

<sup>77</sup> CD III/2, 216



only felt able to elucidate a Christologically informed doctrine of time.<sup>78</sup> Certainly it is his account of time that serves as the black box into which so many potential difficulties are crammed. Perhaps, then, all we can say for the moment before we proceed to examine his doctrine of time is that since to his doctrine of time much has been given, much will be required.

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<sup>78</sup> This is a criticism regarding Barth's anthropology only; in *CD* II/1, the question of space is dealt with in so far as it concerns the doctrine of God (§31.1). Significantly, as we shall see, Barth denies there that God's omnipresence and eternity, for all their relationship, can be considered as parallels (cf. 464ff.).

### Man as Male and Female

We must not get ahead of ourselves, for we have not yet acquired a complete account of Barth's understanding of who man, the *imago Dei*, is. If we were to break off our investigation at this point we would be left with an abstract, timeless conception of humanity that would bear little resemblance to the concrete specificity of the humanity we encounter in ourselves each day. Furthermore, such an account of human nature would hardly have the necessary ballast to withstand the onslaught of attacks that the concept of the person in particular is currently undergoing.

We have seen that man, as Barth understands him through his exegesis of Genesis 1 especially, is not created to be the image of God himself, but is created to be in correspondence with the image of God. That is, man is to be the copy and imitation of the original *imago Dei*, a being in correspondence with the very being of God himself. Therein there is great similarity to Irenaeus, who also saw Adam as only κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ εἰκόνοϋς. However, here again Barth begins – unconsciously, we must assume – to distance himself from the bishop, for he builds into (or sees in) the very nature of the image something that Irenaeus did not. That is, man's correspondence with the image of God is to be found in the plurality – the 'us' and 'our' – of Genesis 1:26. As God lives in togetherness within himself, so he lives in togetherness with man such that men might live in togetherness with one another.

For Barth, a lonely Adam was declared 'not good' precisely because in his solitariness he could not properly correspond to the being of God. As such he could not be the partner of God in the history of creation which follows. Thus if created man were solitary, creation itself would then lack its internal basis in the covenant, which is that partnership of correspondence.

Humanity, the characteristic and essential mode of man's being, is in its root fellow-humanity. Humanity which is not fellow-humanity is inhumanity. For it cannot reflect but only contradict the determination of man to be God's covenant-partner, nor can the God who is no *Deus solitarius* but *Deus triunus*, God in relationship, be mirrored in a *homo solitarius*.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> CD III/4, 117. In practical support of Barth's theory, Paul Jewett writes of how noteworthy it is 'that prisoners look on solitary confinement as the worst form of punishment. Vietnam War prisoners viewed it as the "ultimate ordeal." "The isolation and monotony of the prison," they said, "surpasses in

Man is analogous to God in the fact that he has his counterpart in his fellow man, the relationship within Godself being repeated in the relationship man has with his fellow. Humanity is thus essentially shared (*Mitmenschlichkeit*). Just as the man Jesus, the *imago Dei*, was man for other men, so too to be in the image of God, man must be *homo relationis*, not *homo solitarius*. This, in contrast to (at least Barth's conception of) the Thomist *analogia entis*, is the *analogia relationis*, which analogy sits so closely to the twin terms employed earlier in the *Dogmatics*: the *analogia fidei* and the *analogia gratiae*. To be God's partner in this covenant, man himself needed a partner. Without his partner, man would not only be without glory himself, he simply would not be the glory of God. Clearly here is a different interpretation of the 'the glory of God': not simply a negative alternative to the *vivens homo*, but the actual incorporation of (as opposed to mere association with) fellowship. Barth hastens to add that one may not go on to imply the apotheosis of the I-Thou relationship as Schleiermacher had done in raising the dialectic of human gender to a metaphysical absolute (describing the embrace of lovers as no longer a creaturely embrace but the mystical embrace of God himself). Man remains the creature and servant of God, but is so as his faithful covenant partner. That is, in that his being is a being in this encounter, man finds the closest correspondence and partnership with God.<sup>80</sup>

At one level, in the line of Ebner, Buber and Brunner, Barth is prepared to leave his understanding of humanity as fellow-humanity at that. Here, in every responsible I-Thou relationship, is where Brunner left his interpretation of the *imago* only a few years earlier, despite seeing that human sexuality, unlike other distinctions, 'goes down to the very roots of our personal existence, and penetrates into the deepest "metaphysical" grounds of our personality'.<sup>81</sup> After all, the differentiation and relationship between the I and the Thou in the אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*, that plural being of Genesis 1 that can act in the singular), is not at first sight more obviously specific. The concrete form of differentiation to be found in God's covenant-partner (that is, the relationship between male and female) need not be anything more than an aspect of

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psychological horror and human degradation all the beatings and rats and diarrhoea and morning emptyings of the honeybucket. 'If you think only in terms of physical torture, you miss the subtlety of what we mean by inhumane treatment'" (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 5, 1970, pt. I, p. 10, in Jewett, P. K., *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 20, n. 26)

<sup>80</sup> CD III/4, 120ff.

<sup>81</sup> Brunner, E., *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans., O. Wyon (London: Lutterworth, 1939), 345



man's creatureliness. Certainly the original and concrete form of differentiation and relationship found in the creature is only that, and need not be seen as the only form of differentiation to correspond with the being of God.<sup>82</sup> On this model, sexual duality is a penultimate matter – merely a specific form of the ultimate matter which is the responsible relationship between an 'I' and a 'Thou'. God might have found some other means than sexual duality as the specific form of the 'I-Thou' encounter.

In response we might say that if in fact Barth can leave differentiation at just that, his anthropology does have profound consequences for sexual ethics. He condemns homosexuality, citing Paul's reference to it in Romans 1, as a 'physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay'. Yet it is hard to see on what basis he might be able to launch a consistent critique of any segregation of the genders or homosexuality. Why might a loving relationship between two persons of the same sex not equally correspond to the divine fellowship on this model? Essentially, his argument is reduced to the assertion that homosexual relations are not real relations, but the manifestations of an engorged solipsism:

The real perversion takes place, the original decadence and disintegration begins, where man will not see his partner of the opposite sex and therefore the primal form of fellow-man, refusing to hear his question and to make a responsible answer, but trying to be human in himself as sovereign man or woman, rejoicing in himself in self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. The command of God is opposed to the wonderful esoteric of this *beata solitudo*.<sup>83</sup>

Yet is the homosexual lifestyle necessarily or really so solitary and self-sufficient? It seems hard to accuse it of replacing relations of alterity with those of ipseity when it is simple encounter and not gender that is, at bottom, definitive. On Barth's model, could not man see his partner in some other form of fellow-man and so live in interdependent fellowship, encountering true alterity?<sup>84</sup> Having, even for a moment, untied the

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<sup>82</sup> CD III/1, 196

<sup>83</sup> CD III/4, 166

<sup>84</sup> Barth's non-limitation of relational specificity was taken to precisely this conclusion, to espouse non-abusive homosexual relations, in what has been one of the most influential works for theological gender studies in recent decades, Derrick Sherwin Bailey's *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (New York & London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955). Ironically, the existence of this loophole in Barth's ethical thought may serve, by its very nature as a loophole, as a timely proof that anthropologies

theological anchor mooring human gender in its actuality, Barth is immediately set adrift on the high seas of sexual ethics in need of some other mooring (a mooring which, it has to be said, he never did find or even seek).

However, in the end he does in fact want to speak of man in the concrete specificity of relationship in which he is actually found. The account of the creation of man as male and female in Genesis 2:18-25 is the climax of the whole history of creation and so the 'Old Testament Magna Carta of humanity'.<sup>85</sup> Thus he is deeply reticent about speaking of man without in the same breath saying male or female and also male and female. This is not to imply that there can be no relationships between male and male or female and female. It is that all such other relationships are derivative of that primary and essential relationship between man and woman.<sup>86</sup> Whilst there are many other differences than that of male and female in man, this difference permeates and determines all other differences. So, the apostle Paul could choose to be single as opposed to married, but he could not choose to be a man instead of a woman (and, we might ask, has the advancement of surgical and hormone-replacement technology really changed anything at a fundamental level here?). Adam needed Eve since this fellowship is the 'root of all other fellowship, without which he would not be "good" as a creature, and without which his creation as man would thus be incomplete.'<sup>87</sup> For Barth, that fellowship between Adam and Eve is the primary sign of humanity's ontological existence as creatures destined for covenant. To be God's partner in the covenant, man himself needed a partner, yet not just any other. Animals were deemed unfit partners because of their essential dissimilarity to Adam. Only the woman was found suitable in her 'similarity in difference', the only created being who could be an 'I' and a 'Thou' to man.<sup>88</sup> Another Adam would be like Adam, yet would fail to be his 'Thou' or a proper 'I', in that he would not be different to Adam. In contrast to so much traditional anthropology, Barth has at the least attempted to take the femininity of woman – what distinguishes woman from the masculinity of man – seriously. This is the only alternative to an abstract I-Thou anthropology such as

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of male-female complementary are not necessarily, as is so often suggested, simply rear-guard actions against homosexuality, arbitrarily privileging sexual difference over other forms of human alterity.

<sup>85</sup> CD III/2, 291ff.

<sup>86</sup> In that this binary relationship underpins all others, excluding the possibility of what Eugene Rogers calls an 'egoism à deux' (Rogers, E. F. Jr., *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 273), it might be said to be more fully Trinitarian, more inclusive of the Spirit, than it at first appears, as it informs and is celebrated by relationships external to the primary I and Thou.

<sup>87</sup> CD III/1, 324

<sup>88</sup> CD III/1, 290

Martin Buber's, an anthropology that, for all its worth, is not sufficiently anchored in the actual and particular to avoid its floating off into disconnected mysticism.

Barth puts the rhetorical question to his critics: could anything be more obvious than to understand the image and likeness of God as described in Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:1-2 as signifying the conjunction of male and female?<sup>89</sup> Many since have been disposed to answer, 'Yes'. If Irenaeus was accused of failing to identify a case of Hebrew parallelism in the use of εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις (generally identified as a hendiadys), Barth has been accused of seeing a parallelism where there was none (between 'in the image of God he created him' and 'male and female he created them'). Wolfhart Pannenberg is one who feels that it is not possible to accept Barth's interpretation within Genesis itself. Yet, however those texts might be understood, Pannenberg's point seems to hold, that within the broader context of the salvation-historical realisation of the human image of God in Jesus Christ, the interpretation is justified in a deeper sense. In the New Testament, Christ is the image of God, not in solitary isolation, but as Christ, the head of his body, the Church (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15, 18).<sup>90</sup> Yet even a critic such as Colin Gunton, who saw Barth's interpretation of the *imago Dei* as a forced novelty alien to the thought of Genesis, valued the strength of so concrete an understanding of humanity. His

rather strained use of the male-female relationship at the heart of his conception of human nature appears to have called attention away from the fact that his position is as radically destructive as any empiricist, existentialist, or neoclassical attack on conceptions of the person as a timeless substance problematically linked to a changing body.<sup>91</sup>

The value of this for a culture that lightly throws aside this specificity as secondary is incomparable. Not only is the man who is an island – Descartes' isolated *cogito* – ruled out from creation itself, but this particular differentiation is integral to our correspondence with God and so the very existence of creation. To neutralise the sexes is to dehumanise man. Man cannot then try to deny or exist beyond his sexual determination as mere man by imagining that an overcoming of sexual differences

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<sup>89</sup> CD III/1, 195

<sup>90</sup> Pannenberg, 531

<sup>91</sup> Gunton, C. E., *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: OUP, 1978), 188



would attain some higher unity for mankind. To imagine that would be to imagine that man knows better than his creator.

In the work of God – which is what the human is – there is nothing offensive and therefore no *pudendum*.... And the awful genius of sin is nowhere more plainly revealed than in the fact that it shames man at this centre of his humanity, so that he is necessarily ashamed of his humanity, his masculinity and femininity.<sup>92</sup>

One additional and immense advantage of Barth's explanation of man's being in the *imago Dei* is that it gives no space whatsoever to the Gnostic doctrine of ἀπανδρόομαι. Gregory of Nyssa, as part of what has come to be called the 'garments of skin' hypothesis (the suggestion that Genesis 3:21 refers not to clothes but to the post-lapsarian origins of the human body), had divided Genesis 1:27 in a way completely alien to Barth (and, it has to be said, in a way alien to the text itself to a degree that Barth's own interpretation cannot be accused of), seeing the declaration 'male and female he created them' as a statement subsequent to creation proper such that redemption could involve a return to the sexlessness of the original.<sup>93</sup> Embodiment, and thus sexuality, were departures from truly human ontology, occluding man's essential androgynous *humanum*. For all the allegations against Barth of eisegesis and misogyny, it has to be said that his conclusion at this point has managed to avoid the doctrine most conducive to male chauvinism. Here is an anthropology that recognises that it is not good for the man to be alone. Theology after Barth necessarily finds it much harder than it had been to remove the question of human sexuality to a footnote.

In all this, we need to be scrupulous in avoiding the confusion that the male-female relationship seen first in Adam and Eve is itself the *imago Dei*. They are the *Abbild* (reflection) and *Nachbild* (copy), not the *Urbild* (prototype) and *Vorbild*

<sup>92</sup> CD III/2, 292; cf. III/4, 118, 159f.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Creation of Man*, 16f.. In his examination of the eschatological nature of the male-female relationship, Barth does also directly address the question of the Encratite doctrine of salvation as ἀπανδρόομαι. 'Is A. Oepke right (TWBzNT, I, 785)', he asks, 'when he says that by proposing for man in the perfected lordship of God a sexless being similar to that of the angels Jesus lifts from woman particularly the curse of her sex and sets her at the side of man as no less justifiably the child of God?... But there is no reference here, and there cannot be, to an abolition of the sexes or a cessation of the being of man as male and female.' (CD III/2, 295-6). This is the obvious and logical conclusion once the *imago Dei* has been tied to sexual duality, for if man is to retain his being in the image, further, to be fully renewed in it, then he cannot lose his being as male and female. If he did so, he would either no longer be in the image, or we would need to conclude that sexual duality was never essential to being in the divine image.

(pattern).<sup>94</sup> Thus all that happens to Adam and Eve is a type and reflection of the reality found in Jesus Christ the bridegroom and his relationship to his bride, the Church. To see, then, that it is not good for man to be alone, that he needed a helpmeet, indeed that his emergence as man could only be completed with the creation of woman, is to see the most profound statement about the nature of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man. It is to see that he, Jesus Christ, was never meant to be alone, but to have his counterpart in the Church which believes in him. This was why Adam had to fall into that death-like sleep in which the woman had her origin, for the Church of Jesus Christ was to have its origin in the very real death of her bridegroom and then to stand complete before him in his resurrection. This is the reason why a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, so that they become one flesh, for the man Jesus would leave the glory of his Father for the sake of his Church and become one flesh with her in his incarnation.<sup>95</sup>

To see this is to see that even Jesus Christ in the flesh is too limited, too abstract a definition of man. Building on the Old Testament background to the understanding of Jesus as the Christ (that is, not an isolated figure, but the Head of his community), he refuses to speak of any other Jesus than the Christ, not only in his flesh, but with his body. Using Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 11:7, he sees man as the εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ only in conjunction with his wife. This, Barth argues, is the true appropriation of Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2, for there we do not find in man an isolated male, but man and his wife. To speak then of Jesus Christ as real man, the image of God, we necessarily speak of him with his body, his bride, the Church. The man together with the woman is the man who is the reality and not merely the indication or reflection of the image of God.<sup>96</sup> She is, after all, his glory, a part or member of his own body, indeed his body itself, and therefore cannot be severed from him. The λόγος ἑνσαρκος cannot be without a body. His enfleshment is thus only completed in his embodiment; his incarnation only fulfilled in the gathering in of the Church. Any other disembodied

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<sup>94</sup> CD III/1, 197

<sup>95</sup> CD III/1, 321f. In an otherwise comprehensive exposition, it is unclear as to whether Barth here is deliberately refusing to draw a connection between 'and his mother' and the feminine מִן, though the omission is striking. It may be a case of avoiding the father-mother-child analogue opposed by Augustine (*De Trinitate*, XII, 5-6), and yet it may serve as evidence of a weak pneumatology. One of the critiques levelled at Barth's equation of man's being in the image with Genesis' 'male and female he created them' has been its tendency to be binitarian. So, in the relationship between man and woman we see reflected the duality of the Father and the Son, but not fully trinitarian communion (cf. Gunton, C. E., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 112). We will proceed to examine the question of Barth's pneumatology in its reference to his anthropology in the next chapter, so this is a matter that we might properly defer until then.

<sup>96</sup> CD III/1, 203

Jesus is a docetic spectre, and not the *totus Christus*. This is the full (detractors might say overstuffed) meaning of 'Jesus Christ'. In his creation as male and female, and therefore in the image and likeness of God, man is shown that even in the face of his being in sin, he has reason to look for the man who will be real man for him, male and female, namely Jesus Christ and his Church.

It is worth, briefly, returning here to an issue raised in the first chapter. Francis Watson has asked a question highly pertinent to any anthropology that seeks to be in any sense derivative of Christology: it is, he says 'in Jesus, the image of God, that God tells us who we are. But Jesus was a man, not a woman. Can he really embody the image of God in its wholeness? Can a woman learn from Jesus what it is to be a woman?'<sup>97</sup> Watson answers his own question by asserting that the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth transcends his maleness. Yet to dismiss this particularity as secondary and incidental runs both a methodological risk and the risk of being left with a highly abstract humanity. Irenaeus posited Jesus Christ as not just ἄνθρωπος ἀληθής, but more specifically ἀνὴρ ἀληθής, the husband who would be united with his bride in becoming one flesh with his people. Yet it is Barth who has dealt with Watson's concern most comprehensively. For he did not hold the same presupposition as Watson that it is *Jesus* alone who is the image of God, so telling us who we are. In Barth's thinking it is *Jesus Christ*, the head of his body, and that only with his body, who is the image of God. The man Jesus of Nazareth does not reveal the totality of what it means to be human in himself, else we would be left with a Jesus abstracted from his people. Anthropology is never to be derived, in whatever sense, from Jesuology, but from Christology.<sup>98</sup> Christological anthropology, then, is not intended to hold up Jesus of Nazareth as an individual model for other individuals. What it does show is man's need of a fellow (primarily Jesus Christ and his Church).

This is not to say that the Church is a part of his divinity, though it does mean that she becomes an accessory part of divinity in God's choosing his Son as saviour for her.<sup>99</sup> It has to be said that at this point Barth does run dangerously close to, if not into, what von Balthasar has called an 'ecclesiological pan-Christism'.<sup>100</sup> For, he writes:

<sup>97</sup> Watson, F., *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 285

<sup>98</sup> The significance of this can be seen inversely in Eugene Rogers' failure to appreciate Barth's messianic understanding of Jesus Christ: 'If Christ is the complete image, then the image need not be a dyad.' (Rogers, 225)

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Table Talk*, 65; *CD* III/1, 296ff., 321; IV/1, 43f.; IV/2, 300.

<sup>100</sup> Balthasar, H. U. von, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 107



The foundation of the Church is also its law and its limit. We might say that it corresponds to the *anhypostasis* of Christ's human nature. By its inmost nature the Church is forbidden to want independence of Jesus Christ, or sovereignty in thought and action.<sup>101</sup>

Certainly this takes into account the relation of the Church to Christ as a body to its head. Yet is there really room here for the Church to be the bride, a relational 'other'? Only, we might answer, if the correspondence to the anhypostatic nature of Christ's humanity breaks down. Yet whilst the bride is brought to share in all the status of the bridegroom, the woman is not the man. When viewing the analogy between Christ and the Church and man and woman, though, Barth developed into consistency. That is, man and woman, as he is happily prepared to say even into the highly charged atmosphere of gender studies, are not absolutely equal and interchangeable. Man is the head, woman the body. This order of succession he does not examine in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, whilst he considers it to be an aspect of fallenness in Volume I/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>102</sup> Yet it is clearly seen as an aspect of being created in the image of God in Volumes III/2 and III/4, increasingly firmly grounded in the Trinitarian being of God. Thus there can be a preceding and a following, a super- and sub-ordination. Man is the source; woman does not choose and create, she is chosen and created. So the Church did not first recognise Jesus, but was recognised and formed by him. In the fullest sense, this is why it is the man, and not the woman, who exclaims in Genesis 2:23 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. We hear no response from the woman in Genesis. It is only in the Old Testament's 'second Magna Carta' of humanity, the king's song of all songs in which we hear the answering voice of the woman.<sup>103</sup> Man is the lord of the woman and the woman his elect.<sup>104</sup> So, even in bestowing his righteousness and rank on the Church, Christ remains her lord and head. Yet succession should in no sense be mistaken for value. First, man and woman are not hierarchically related at the level of their being. Precedence and subsequence should

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<sup>101</sup> CD I/2, 216

<sup>102</sup> CD I/2, 194

<sup>103</sup> CD III/1, 303, 313, 321; III/2, 293ff.; III/4, 216f. In this 'second Magna Carta' the Church is depicted as a bride in real relationship, responding to the groom. However, one has to wonder whether this response did in practice operate as a 'second Magna Carta' in Barth's thought; in contrast to the gallons of ink spilled on Genesis 2 throughout CD III, less than five spread out pages are devoted to the Song. Thus, whilst Barth in no sense denies the Church's existence as a being in relationship, his system has the effect of covertly occluding the fact, his Christology steamrolling his understanding and use of the woman's reply to man.

<sup>104</sup> CD III/1, 297, 306; III/2, 312; III/4, 169.

not be mistaken for superiority and inferiority. Second, without the subsequence of the woman man could not be man. As Paul Jewett accurately, if mockingly, put it: 'although the woman is the glory of the man who is the glory of God, her glory is the greater because the man could not be the glory of God without her who is his glory. The woman's subordination, then, becomes not humiliation but exaltation!'<sup>105</sup> To treat the woman as inferior is the very opposite of Adam's valuing of Eve in his jubilant exclamation, and the very opposite of Christ's incorporation of the Church. The ordering of man and woman imperils neither, but is the framework for their self-fulfilment under God, for by it they both attest to the covenant that is the basis for their being. So it can be seen that any humiliation of the woman was not the result of her subordination, but sin's perversion and disruption of the created sexual harmony, through which man's superordination was perverted into a blind domination, and the woman's subordination perverted into a jealous desire for emancipation.<sup>106</sup>

Despite his caution here, his detailed treatment of the theme of a super- and subordination of man and woman is one of the more controversial sections in the *Church Dogmatics* (III/4, 116-240) and the theme of sexual differentiation in general has understandably brought the accusation of patriarchy against Barth.<sup>107</sup> Wolf Krötke pleads that the stratification of gender that entails precedence and subsequence is a puzzling but merely peripheral and expendable concrete mode of the basic form of humanity which is man in communication and encounter with his fellow, whether that be male or female. The only place, he feels, for such a definite ordering, is in that of the soul and body of the individual human person.<sup>108</sup> Such a plea could have held its ground within the context of Volume I, and even to some extent in the context of the ordering of sexual differentiation as just the concrete form of man's differentiation and being as being in encounter. However, that specifically ordered relationship came to be

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<sup>105</sup> Jewett, 73. Elsewhere, he adds, 'The authority to which the woman bows in her subordination to the man is not that of the man as such, but the τάξις (order) under which they both are placed. This order at the human level is only a token of the obedience that the church owes to Christ. Hence it is a mode of subordination that is sui generis; it is free, honourable, and meaningful, taking nothing from the woman and giving nothing to the man. (Jewett, P. K. with Shuster, M., *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human. A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996), 147)

<sup>106</sup> CD III/2, 287; III/1, 310

<sup>107</sup> Janowski, C., 'Zur paradigmatischen Bedeutung der Geschlechterdifferenz in K. Barth's *Kirchlicher Dogmatik*' in Kuhlmann, H., (ed.) *Und drinnen waltet die züchtige Hausfrau. Zur Ethik der Geschlechterdifferenz* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1995), 140ff. Eugene Rogers gleefully notes the opprobrium that this specific working out of co-humanity in terms of precedence and subsequence instantly attracted: 'According to oral legends circulating at Yale, Barth admirer Richard Niebuhr threw the volume across a room in frustration.' (heard from Hans Frei, Rogers, 141)

<sup>108</sup> Krötke, W., 'The humanity of the human person in Karl Barth's anthropology' (trans., P. G. Ziegler) in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 169

seen by Barth as analogous to the relationship between Christ and the Church, even rooted in the divine being of Trinitarian fellowship, at which point it necessarily began to entail precedence and subsequence.<sup>109</sup> As soon as the superordinate-subordinate order was seen as comparable to both divine-human covenantal relations and perichoretic relations with Godself, that ordering could no longer be inconsequential, to be jettisoned upon its clash with cultural mores. To wish that such ranking be limited to its containment within the human individual is to miss its ultimate significance in Barth's thinking. To actually remove such ranking would either destroy the *analogia relationis* or serve as an attempt to bridge the infinite qualitative distinction between God and creaturely being. A large part of the reason why Barth feels that he simply cannot be harmonised with those who seek to deny the super- and sub-ordination of man and woman is their different understanding of how essential sexual duality is. At very much the same time as Barth was occupied with his doctrine of creation, Simone de Beauvoir asserted, in her classic appeal for the abolition of what she called the myth of the 'eternal feminine', her celebrated remark: '*On ne naît pas femme, on le devient*' ('One is not born, but becomes a woman').<sup>110</sup> Barth felt that a salutary and noteworthy (though 'very pagan') attack on androcentricity had fallen into an effective denial of the real being of the woman, gender being reduced to an extrinsic condition, improper to the human being as such.<sup>111</sup> He, on the other hand, felt compelled to affirm sexual precedence and subsequence because of his refusal to downgrade sexuality in this way.

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<sup>109</sup> Paul Jewett fails to appreciate this, even though he has correctly located the basis for Barth's understanding of gender stratification: 'As we see it, the fundamental difficulty with Barth's argument for female subordination is just this: the theology of humankind as male and female that he himself has espoused is inimical to a doctrine of sexual hierarchy. In such a theology, the man and the woman are partners in life, so related to each other as to be a fellowship like God is in himself, the very image of him who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The plain implication of such a theology is obviously the equality of the man and woman under God. Yet having gained this important insight, Barth nonetheless draws back from following its implications to the conclusion to which it leads. (*Who We Are*, 148) On the contrary, it seems that Barth has been entirely consistent, seeing the precedence and subsequence of man and woman respectively as analogous of two stratified relationships, that between the Father and the Son, and that between Christ and his Church.

<sup>110</sup> Beauvoir, S. de, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953), 273. The 'eternal feminine' means that woman is being understood *sub specie aeternitatis*, as the empirical bearer of the feminine principle of subsequence. As such, woman symbolises the relationship of the creation to its Creator. In Roman Catholic thought, the principle of the Eternal Feminine has been used as an explanation of the dynamics of the Fall. So, woman was tempted precisely because she was the one to whom belonged the ascendancy in creation (just as the ascendancy would belong to her in redemption through her 'seed' (Gen. 3:15). This area commanded some special interest for Barth because of Charlotte von Kirschbaum's discussion of the matter in her *Die wirkliche Frau* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1949; trans.: *The Question of Woman*, trans., Shepherd, J., ed. Jackson, E. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1996)).

<sup>111</sup> CD III/4, 161f.. It might be noted that de Beauvoir is probably making a more limited point than Barth imagines: not that she is imagining sexuality to be an accident, but that modern woman in particular has been compressed into her stereotypical role by an androcentric culture (cf. Bailey, 28). However, even if he has erected a straw woman, the essence of his argument still holds.



Sexual duality is rooted not only in creation and the nature of man, but in the very being of God.

Again, this is not to say that if Christ comes to his Church, if God comes to man, he does so out of obligation or as the result of some external compulsion to be gracious to man. However, Barth is prepared to use alarming language to show God's being in becoming. God is not a static monad. Nor then indeed can there be in the Son an innermost detachment in which he is a private individual. His very relationship with the Father is not a private affair reserved for his own enjoyment, but, as proclaimed in John 17, a relationship he has for others as a public person. He is the man for the woman, the man for other men, and does not exist stoically or mystically apart from them.<sup>112</sup> As the woman was taken from the man, so the two must come together again in one flesh. In this sense it can be said that man is the weaker half in his dependence on woman for the fulfilment of his relationship to her and so his own very being. In the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ for the creature, the being of God radiates and triumphs and so is glorified. Thus the being of God is more glorious than if he had kept his glory to himself. This

is obviously the inner presupposition of the divine decree of grace and of the divine creative will founded upon it. In some sense it is a matter of the self-justification and self-sanctification of God without which He could not have loved the creature nor willed or actualised its existence.<sup>113</sup>

Not only is the body meant for the Lord, but also the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13). Woman is the glory of man because her creation is the very culmination and completion of the humanity of his own creation. As such, whilst anthropology is not to be a covert form of cosmology (the cosmos, for Barth, not being *μακράνθρωπος*), the story of creation can be compressed into the story of the emergence of woman such that she participates in the completion of creation as a whole. Together Jesus Christ and his Church constitute the internal basis of creation.<sup>114</sup>

Given this inclusive, as opposed to privately exclusive, sense in which Barth conceives the divine likeness of man found in the one man Jesus, those who have faith in him are brought to participate in the image of God (here he refers to such passages as

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<sup>112</sup> CD III/2, 209ff.

<sup>113</sup> CD III/1, 59

<sup>114</sup> CD III/1, 302f., 322; III/2, 187

2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 24; 3:10).<sup>115</sup> Moreover, given that Jesus cannot be Christ and exist exclusively for himself, being the *imago Dei* solitarily, there is no sinful man who is not affected and determined by him.

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<sup>115</sup> *CD* III/1, 204; IV/2, 281

## 5

## What is Man?

## Spirit and Man

It is ironic that whilst relationship and personal encounter have been integral to Barth's definition of man, one of the concerns with his anthropology that so far has largely only bubbled under the surface has been the question of the reality of such relationship(s). In many ways, this is just another way of inquiring as to the bearing his pneumatology has on his anthropology. Or, to put it negatively, has Barth's generally anhypostatic conception of man, coupled with his equation of man's being in the image of God with Genesis' 'male and female he created them', effectively stripped his anthropology of any pneumatic basis?<sup>1</sup>

We might begin answering with Barth's affirmation that if God is to be true and not a liar (in other words, if the Spirit's role *ad extra* in and to man is to be grounded in the eternal being of God), then the Spirit's work in creation, and on man in particular, must have its counterpart in a prior work on the Son in the Trinity. Specifically, that prior work is the work of complete approval of God's *opus internum ad extra* – his decision to love the humanity whom he would create by uniting himself with man in the Son. It should not be imagined that the Spirit is thereby relegated to the merely honorary role of rubber stamp in the heavenly court. Given that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the meeting place and bond of union between the two, the whole reality of the gospel – the entire order of the relation between God the Creator and his creatures – exists and pre-exists in him. In the Spirit the will of the Father and the obedience of the Son meet as the decree which is the intra-divine beginning of all things. Therefore, it is in God the Holy Spirit that the creature as such pre-exists and therefore has its being: 'it is by the communication and impartation of that in which God exists as God that it comes about that man can exist as man.'<sup>2</sup> As the Spirit perpetually secures God's free relationship to himself, so the Spirit secures in history the relationship between God and man, acting out in history an eternal, intra-divine

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<sup>1</sup> In understanding this point it is worth remembering one of the critiques levelled at Barth's equation of man's being in the image of God with Genesis' 'male and female he created them': its tendency to be binitarian. So, in the relationship between man and woman we see reflected the duality of the Father and the Son, but not fully trinitarian communion.

<sup>2</sup> CD III/1, 57



role. As the Spirit is the one that enables the Son to be the object of the divine love *ad intra*, so the Spirit is the one that enables man to be the object of the divine love *ad extra*. We might say that if the incarnate Word of God as the object of the eternal divine decree of grace is the ground of creation and of the creature, the Spirit is their necessary condition. The fellowship of the Father and the Son that constitutes the intra-divine foundation of creation is secured by the Spirit. Thus the Spirit is the intra-divine guarantee – the divine *conditio sine qua non* – of the creation and preservation of the creature.

The Spirit, then, is the life-principle of man. In fact, before being so specific, we must remember that man is only one creature – however central – in the creation as a whole, and shares his dependency on the Spirit with the entire creation. Indeed, it is a pneumatically based equality that man has with other parts of creation (and especially the animated parts of creation – the beasts and the host of heaven – which, Barth points out, are also said to be dependent on the Spirit, according to Psalm 33:6), for it is when the Spirit is removed that animated beings cease to be animate and are threatened with dissolution until the reappearance in recreative power of the same Spirit (Psalm 104:29-30). The Spirit is the principle of life – of creation and renewal – applicable to the entire cosmos. One might even ask, given that animals (described as ‘living souls’ in the first creation account) are dependent upon the Spirit, on what basis it might be said that they do not have just such a relationship as man does with God? Barth points out that the only distinguishing feature of man here is the fact, according to the second creation narrative, that God turned to man in the most direct and personal way to breathe the breath of life into man’s nostrils.<sup>3</sup> Thus, while it is Christians as members of the body of Christ that are the ones ‘filled with the Spirit’, that same dependence on the Spirit for life is a more general anthropological reality. Regardless of his faith, that a man lives is directly equated with the fact that he breathes – he is the recipient of the Spirit of life. His breath is an answer to the life-giving breathing of the Creator. Having that divinely provided breath means that man may live, God being there for him. To die is to give up the Spirit (Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23). If a man ceases to breathe and thus have Spirit, then he will cease to exist as the soul of his body. The union of soul and body, effected by the Spirit, will dissolve as the Spirit departs.<sup>4</sup>

Man, then, has Spirit in so far as he breathes what God has breathed into him. To say man has Spirit is to say that man is by and from God in an ever new act of

<sup>3</sup> CD III/1, 236; cf. III/2, 395f.

<sup>4</sup> CD III/2, 366; cf. Wolff, H. W., *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1974), 10-25

grace. Man therefore *has* Spirit, and yet it is critical in Barth's thinking that we should not go on to say that man *is* Spirit. Barth is categorical in his rejection of anthropological trichotomism (the view of man as a being consisting of three inherent parts: body, soul and spirit), not so much because he sees that it has effectively given man two souls (though he does), but because of his view of Spirit. At death, the Spirit is 'given back' like something borrowed (Luke 23:46), whilst awakening from the dead involves the Spirit's return to a man (Luke 8:55). Thus, Barth concludes, the Spirit, 'coming and going, lives His own life over against the man.'<sup>5</sup> Spirit, then, is not the property of man, but the principle of God's movement towards him. The Spirit is God in his creative movement towards man such that when God breathes out his Spirit on man, man breathes the breath of life and becomes a living being. To suggest that Spirit might be an innate part of man's being at some level would involve at least an indirect identification of man with God, transferring to man the divine prerogatives of grace and life, for Spirit is what God is and does for man, man himself being receptive soul (of his body).<sup>6</sup>

Here he finds what sets his theology and anthropology apart from Liberal or Neo-Protestant, Existential and Roman Catholic theologies and anthropologies in that they adopt some mediating principle between God's self-revelation and man's response in faith other than the Spirit of God. The doctrine of divine immanence exemplified in theologies such as those of Schleiermacher, Troeltsch and Herrmann (even to some extent, he argues, Augustine) envisaged an almost unbroken continuity between the divine Spirit and the human spirit (or, the Spirit and the 'individual's immediate putting forth of religion'), allowing for a naturalisation of the gospel and its compounding with humanistic philosophy, sociology and psychology. Barth had reacted to an expression of this in Erich Przywara's defence of the *analogia entis* with the publication of a lecture on the Holy Spirit in 1929 (*The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*). There he argued that there is no created medium between God and man, a notion that had seeped into Roman Catholic as well as Protestant thinking. Instead the Holy Spirit is one who, without ceasing in any sense to be God, makes immanent the transcendent God, in the process making real that relation of the creature to himself by which the creature has life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> CD III/2, 365

<sup>6</sup> CD III/2, 354

<sup>7</sup> Barth, K., *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, trans. Hoyle, R. B. (Louisville, KY.: Westminster/John Knox, 1993)

That said, his pneumatology had developed in the intervening decade or so between that lecture and the writing of Chapter X of the *Dogmatics*. The doctrine of the eternal λόγος ἑνσαρκος that had been formed in the composition of Volume II enabled Barth to rephrase the issue:

the question whether Spirit is God or creature cannot be answered because it is falsely put. Spirit in His being *ab extra* is neither a divine nor a created something, but an action and attitude of the Creator in relation to His creation. We cannot say that Spirit is, but that He takes place as the divine basis of this relation and fellowship. Spirit is precisely the essence of God's operation in relation to His creature. Spirit is thus the powerful and exclusive meeting initiated between Creator and creature.<sup>8</sup>

Even given his caution, that he is speaking only of the Spirit 'in his being *ab extra*', this is a quite remarkable formulation. Not that the Spirit has now acquired any of the continuity with the human spirit so vilified in his 1929 polemic, but that now the very being of the Spirit can be said to be necessarily and essentially related to the creature. The Spirit is, after all, the eternal *vinculum* between the Father and, not a λόγος ἑνσαρκος, the second person of the Trinity *per se*, but the divine-human person of Jesus Christ his Son. The Spirit is therefore both the attitude of the Creator to his creature and the response of the creature to the Creator.

So monergistic a pneumatology is guaranteed to attract hostility, as indeed it has. Philip Rosato argues that Barth has effectively stolen from the poor and given to the rich by having deprived man of any inherent subjectivity or spirituality for the sake of guaranteeing the Spirit's supremacy.<sup>9</sup> Intrinsically man is reduced to an empty and impotent vessel without any extrinsic meaning other than that given to him in the Spirit's gracious approach. Or, as George Hendry has put it:

If there is no relation between the Creator and the creation subsisting all the time, but only the relation established by the act of grace, it becomes difficult to maintain the existence of the creation as a reality *over against* God. In his

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<sup>8</sup> CD III/2, 356

<sup>9</sup> Rosato, P. J., *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 142; cf. Come, A., *An Introduction to Barth's "Dogmatics" for Preachers* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 152



treatment of the doctrine of creation, Barth resolves the Berkeleian doubt as to the existence of the world by merging it in its salvation: *esse est salvari*. The sovereignty of grace has become totalitarianism.<sup>10</sup>

There seems to be some confusion here. Hendry has rightly noted that there is no natural substructure here to man or creation as a whole onto which God can later add a spiritual superstructure. The very substructure of creation is spiritual – that is, established by the act of grace. However, that dynamic Barth does envisage as subsisting all the time in the very being of the Spirit as the Father loves Jesus Christ, the eternal λόγος ἑνσαρκος. There are indeed problems in the ‘relationship’ between the Creator and his creature on this model. It might even be said that they effectively amount to a form of totalitarianism – yet not in the sense suggested by Hendry. Any totalitarianism or dispossession of man is not the result of divine monergism but the lack of real relationship between the Lord and his elect. Has the Spirit really secured any relationship other than that between God and his Word?

Barth certainly feels so. As early as the *Göttingen Dogmatics* he had repeated the psalmist’s question ‘What is Man?’, commenting “‘that thou art mindful of him’ is what interests us about man’.<sup>11</sup> Far from the Christological exposition of man he would later give, his concern then was more simply the *Deus dixit*. Even in this more abstract form, though, he reveals an understanding of man reflective of the psalmist’s, whose question about man is logically constructed upon the presupposition that God is mindful of him: ‘what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?’.

A relationship between God and man lies at the very heart of Barth’s anthropology, as the very essence of man’s being. God’s freely given relationship to man is what defines man, and no other factor, no assortment of innate faculties, can be said to be either constitutive or definitive of man. It should be noted well that sin is included at the top of this list of non-determinative factors. Not that sin is merely a spectral semi-reality, but that it is merely parasitic upon God’s good creation. In fact, it has the status of ‘impossible possibility’.<sup>12</sup> To decide for sin is to make a decision against one’s very being as man. As for the actual state of godlessness itself, it is not even a possibility impossibly. In Immanuel, God has united himself with man, and so

<sup>10</sup> Hendry, G. S., *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1965), 109

<sup>11</sup> Barth, K., *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, ed. H. Reiffen; trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1991), 72

<sup>12</sup> CD III/2, 146

man cannot escape God. God is absolutely, and not merely relatively, with us. Man's godlessness can thus only be relative (or, perhaps better, merely illusory), for it cannot make God a "manless" God.<sup>13</sup> Man is with God, and it is a straight ontological impossibility for man to be without God, whatever decision against reality he might choose. God *is* with us. This is what it means to be rational and logical man: not to be a Boethian individual, but a dynamic, relational agent, a being in encounter with God. From the very outset man must be understood as a being in some kind of relationship to God, and thus one simply cannot attempt to go behind the divine-human relationship to find some property of man more essential. This would entail that there is some being of man prior to his relationship to God, something Barth categorically denies. Man's very being is provided in God's approach to him, just as the point of contact between man and God is provided by God himself in the act of revelation.<sup>14</sup> He therefore criticises the anthropology of traditional Christian dogmatics for having proceeded directly to the question of the form of man's being without having shown him essentially as a being in covenant with God and in encounter with fellow men.<sup>15</sup> Surely a large part of the reason for this divergence from tradition has to be the difference between his methodology and that of the dogmatics he objects to. As Robert Jenson puts it:

The creature's destiny to live in loving fellowship with God is not discoverable by any amount of examination, empirical or philosophical. Let an omniscient psychoanalyst, an eschatological physicist, and Heidegger himself combine their efforts. They may discover my Oedipus complex, the complete mechanism of my life and my capacity for self-transcendence. But in the infinitely long final report of their investigations this one proposition will not occur: This being is created to be loved by God.<sup>16</sup>

One particular way in which Barth speaks of man as a being in covenant and encounter with God is through the specific technical layer of meaning he gives to the term 'history' (*Geschichte*). For Barth, history is not a description of the existence of a

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<sup>13</sup> CD III/2, 136; IV/1, 480; cf. II/2, 317

<sup>14</sup> CD III/2, 72

<sup>15</sup> CD III/2, 325

<sup>16</sup> Jenson, R. W., *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963), 23

creature, even when it makes changes, as long as those changes are intrinsic as opposed to relational. History is encounter.

The history of a being begins, continues and is completed when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response and in relation to this new factor.<sup>17</sup>

To clarify: inanimate beings such as plants, he holds, have no 'history' as such because their existence involves no encounter (a safe proposition, we might allow, unless, of course, as Daniel Price suggests, we hold to an extreme form of pantheism!<sup>18</sup>). Their existence is simply typified by set characteristics of their own predetermined and innate biological nature and rhythm. There is no real 'happening' at a deep level of their being to amount to change or encounter. To have history is necessarily to have an *anima*. For this reason naturalism must necessarily be rejected in that it can offer no more to creaturely being, including man, than self-contained existence. There is no room in materialist dogma such as Darwinism for real encounter and so for such history. Yet Barth feels he must go further. Where the existential philosophy of a Buber might accord to normal human interaction the status of such history, Barth does not. Authentic history of this sort is found only in the man Jesus. There we see the primary encounter of God's approach to man and man's response to God. Apart from that primal history (*Urgeschichte*) seen in the man Jesus, humanity would be lacking history, even lacking being. Without Christ, man, if somehow he could exist at all, would be reduced to the inanimate status of the vegetable, merely acting out the properties intrinsic to his own self-contained being. In him humanity has encounter with God and relation to him, for each person is implicated in the primal history of this man. In him man has history. Christ animates humanity by bringing fellowship with God.

As we have seen, man's being as the covenant-partner of God entails that man unavoidably lives in encounter with his fellow man. This is not to say that such encounter constitutes history as such, for that is the domain of God, the creator of all history (*Heilsgeschichte*). Yet God's approach to man is necessarily reflected in the

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<sup>17</sup> CD III/2, 158

<sup>18</sup> Price, D. J., *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 97, citing CD III/2, 121.



approach of man to man, which approach can be said to amount to history in a derivative sense (*kleine Geschichte*) rather than history *per se*. Man's being as a being-in-encounter cannot be as a being directed heavenwards only. To be the covenant partner of the God who is not *Deus solitarius* but *Deus triunus*, man must live in earthly encounter too, for that is the inviolable correspondence to his determination as a being with God. To illustrate the contrast between this and the 'modern man', Daniel Price astutely juxtaposes Barth's new anathema – *Si quis dixerit hominem esse solitarium, anathema sit* (if anyone will have said that man is solitary, let him be anathema) – with Carl Jung's statement, 'The man whom we can with justice call "modern" is solitary'.<sup>19</sup> It is not, though, as if Jung was a solitary voice; his assessment is just one of a culture in the West that dreams Nietzschean dreams of azure loneliness: witness Sartre notoriously opining 'hell is other people'.<sup>20</sup>

The primary earthly encounter between an I and a Thou for the real man is the meeting of a man and a woman in marriage. It is in this encounter that humanity is in the likeness of the being of its Creator and reflective of the marriage of God and man in and through Jesus Christ. And, as it is the Spirit that enables harmony between God and man, so it is the same Spirit that enables actual marital harmony and unity between a man and a woman. Marital love, as the husband and wife testify to the possibility of unity won for men in Christ, is a sign of the efficacy of the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost. Through this the meaning of manhood and womanhood, which otherwise would necessarily be misconstrued, is revealed as analogous to the intra-divine fellowship of God echoed in the love of Christ for his Church.<sup>21</sup>

That relationship between a man and a woman is, even if definitive, only the primary relationship between a human I and Thou. To examine the reality of other human relationships Barth develops and modifies Martin Buber's term 'encounter' (which is broad enough to stretch beyond the 'personal' so as, for example, to include encounter with a tree) so that there are quite specific standards by which an encounter might be validated as such. Thus, it is hoped, no mere connection, acquaintance, or objectification of man by his fellow might be passed off as a true encounter. Referring to Matthew 6:22f., Barth suggests that being in encounter consists first in the fact that one man physically looks the other in the eye (as we shall see, it is significant that this is a physical encounter of external forms). Such beholding is, of course, analogous to

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<sup>19</sup> Price, 97

<sup>20</sup> Such is the conclusion of Sartre's play *No Exit*.

<sup>21</sup> CD III/2, 203

and derivative of the primary encounter between God and man, an encounter which is, ultimately, 'face to face'. To look one's fellow man in the eye is not only to be the subject of the looking, but to allow oneself, reciprocally, to be the object of looking also. Within a bureau (perhaps the illustration could be updated to include the internet and e-mail), for instance, men have the ability to be effectively invisible to each other, for they fail to do precisely this. Merely looking at another man does not entail according him human status – we may see an It as opposed to a Thou. Such looking is what Ernst Jünger was referring to when he called seeing an 'act of aggression.'<sup>22</sup> In contrast, looking the other in the eye involves a two-sided humility and openness. Through looking one's fellow in the eye, allowing the windows of the soul to meet, as it were, a true encounter is achieved as each accords to the other real humanity. Secondly, being in genuine encounter involves mutual speech and hearing. As God does not merely speak, but also hears his Word, so man must also live in the same reciprocity. Yet mere speaking and answering cannot be said to constitute the mutuality required of a true encounter: 'Two monologues do not constitute a dialogue.'<sup>23</sup> The words used in private conversations, lectures, pulpits, and written media are all too often barbaric and empty, revealing the emptiness of the wordsmiths themselves. Instead of stringing together arbitrary symbols or sounds, the real speech that evidences encounter is the disclosure of an I to a Thou and vice versa. It is mutuality that constitutes the encounter and thus the very humanity of the participants themselves. Thirdly, being in genuine encounter consists in the climax of action as we render mutual assistance in the act of being. This should not be confused with an unhealthy altruism in which one acts as if he has no need of the other despite the other's present need of him. Mutual assistance entails that each needs the other, and is therefore the climax and goal of reciprocal sight and speech and hearing. Yet fourthly, all this occurrence must be done on both sides with gladness. This is the final step of humanity, ensuring that man's mutuality is not an inhuman and merely external dynamic, but the product of his inner being and so reflective of his inner being.<sup>24</sup> Our concern is with a more fundamental problem concerning relationship in Barth's theology, and yet we need to note that Barth's qualifications do appear to be unfounded, even if laudable. On what basis might these qualifications be deemed preferable or more accurate than any others?

<sup>22</sup> *Der unsterbliche Geist in der Natur* (1938), 63, cited in Pieper, J., *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Dru, A. (New York & Scarborough, Ontario: Mentor, 1952), 25

<sup>23</sup> CD III/2, 259

<sup>24</sup> CD III/2, 250ff.

Without necessarily indulging in critique, there is a limit to this earthly encounter. There is the God-man relationship and the man-man relationship for Barth, but, as Andrew Linzey has demonstrated, there is very little (if any) by way of any relationship between man and other, non-human creaturely reality.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen, the inanimate creation in Barth's thought is simply incapable of history – it cannot exist as a Thou to any I, whether divine, human or non-human. Yet this Barth sees as equally true of the non-human animate creation. Whilst the non-human creation as a whole does exist as an external other to both man and God in co-existence, it cannot exist in true confrontation or reciprocity.<sup>26</sup> There is a worry that this might in fact turn out to manifest a failure to give creation its proper place in redemption. Yet our question is whether man himself can exist in true partnership with God, or whether, to use Andrew Linzey's phrase, man himself is not in fact the neglected creature.

In order to answer that question, it is necessary first to posit another question: how is it that the creature can be? Barth gives what he feels is a necessarily indirect answer:

For them [the writers of the New Testament as much as the writers of the Old Testament] there is no ζωή and therefore no ζωοποίησις of the creature apart from that already initiated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and to be expected from Him. And it is in this ζωοποιεῖν that they see the work of the Spirit. In this indirect way, by expecting life – life in the new aeon which is true life for them – from the work of the Spirit, and from Him alone, they also bear witness that there could be no creature, nor any creation, if God were not also the Holy Spirit and active as such, just as He is also the Father and Son and active as such.<sup>27</sup>

As Adam was imbued with typical breath, so Christ with filled without limit with the πνεῦμα θεοῦ, and so became the πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. Only there, in the filling of Jesus Christ with the *Spiritus Redemptor*, is God's creative movement towards man fulfilled. The creative work of the Spirit merely demonstrated the potentiality of man's creatureliness. Yet that potentiality is only ever realised in the redemptive outpouring

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<sup>25</sup> Linzey, A., *The Neglected Creature: The Doctrine of the Non-human Creation and its Relation with the Human in the Thought of Karl Barth* (PhD: University of London, 1986)

<sup>26</sup> CD III/1, 184

<sup>27</sup> CD III/1, 58



of the Spirit (as opposed to man's own effort). After all, the soul of man is not the Spirit of God, and whilst the Spirit may be called the Spirit of man, he remains the Spirit of God and never becomes the innate property of man. He is the quickening breath of God by which man becomes a living soul. Thus it is that the principle of renewal is considered as actually logically prior to, and so determinative of, the principle of creaturely reality. The *Spiritus Redemptor* illumines the *Spiritus Creator*. It can only be seen, for instance, that 'the Spirit gives life' in the broad anthropological sense of the breath of God enabling men to breathe and live, through passages such as John 6:63 and 2 Corinthians 3:6, which are of primarily soteriological significance. The life-imparting turning of God to man in Eden could not be detected from nature alone. It is revealed in the reconstitution of the Church of God as he turns to man in the same life-imparting manner at Pentecost. This is the reason behind Jesus' quite deliberate emulation of Genesis 2:7 in his breathing on his disciples with the words: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22). This is also very much to the point in the Pauline association of creation with the resurrection of the dead in Romans 4:17, the act of creation being called a καλεῖν τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα.<sup>28</sup> There, in the fulfilment of the divine breathing at Pentecost, it is elucidated what it was that created man was destined to be. In the very same way as the appreciation of grace necessarily precedes that of sin, so it is only in man's fulfilment that his original potential becomes apparent.<sup>29</sup> We might add that this paradox is not simply noetic. The Spirit is not just known as, but actually is primarily the Spirit of the New Covenant in that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

On this relation between reconciliation and creation, von Balthasar writes

because the Son himself becomes man in the midst of his creatures, creation already has an essential connection to him, just as he has to creation. No longer does Barth have to manoeuvre around extra-Calvinist doctrine to prove that the Redeemer is also Lord over this (questionable, contradictory) creation. The perspective has been turned inside out: because Christ the Redeemer became man in time, creation in its entirety is something good from the outset. It is already justified. And, from the very onset of God's decision to create, it is appropriate for God to choose man for his partner.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> CD III/1, 244ff., cf. Rosato, 98

<sup>29</sup> CD III/1, 57

<sup>30</sup> Balthasar, H. U. von, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 114

Reconciliation is the internal ground, and creation the external ground of human nature. Nature does not therefore stand in opposition to grace. It is actually founded upon it (already removing the conception of sin as a power so transformative that it has rendered man an entirely different being to what he was created to be<sup>31</sup>). Thus the Word of God does not come to man as an afterthought. Man is summoned to be God's covenant-partner in his very existence. To be addressed by God is to be summoned into being. There is no human being prior to the call of God in his Word, and therefore the being of man consists in being with Jesus, in the hearing of the Word of God. The being of man is a being in gratitude.<sup>32</sup>

If, then, we are to come to any conclusions about the relationship (or lack thereof) between the Spirit and man, we are required to seek them within the defining relationship of the Spirit to Jesus Christ. Here we may begin with the acknowledgement that Jesus had an utterly unique relationship to the Spirit. Whilst possession of the Spirit is not a general human state, the Spirit being imparted only 'by measure' (John 3:34) and not in fullness or permanency, the anointed Son has the Spirit lastingly and totally.

He is the man to whom the creative movement of God has come primarily, originally and therefore definitively, who derives in His existence as soul and body from this movement, and for whom to be the 'living soul' of an earthly body and earthly body of a 'living soul' is not a mere possibility but a most proper reality. He breathes lastingly and totally in the air of the 'life-giving Spirit.'<sup>33</sup>

The relationship of this man to the Holy Spirit is so close and special that it can be said that, without being fathered by the Spirit, the man Jesus owed his very existence as such to the presence and power of the Spirit. Thus can the Son be without beginning of days or end of life (Hebrews 7:3), having life in himself (John 5:26). Philip Rosato builds on this aspect of Barth's thinking what can only be described as a distinctly

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<sup>31</sup> 'We do not associate ourselves, therefore, with the common theological practice of depreciating the human nature as much as possible in order to oppose to it the more effectively what may be said of man by divine grace. Orientation by the picture of the man Jesus shows us a very different way' (*CD III/2*, 274).

<sup>32</sup> *CD III/2*, 142ff.

<sup>33</sup> *CD III/2*, 334

overblown argument for a Pneuma, as opposed to a Logos, Christology in Barth (indeed a Pneumatocentrism as opposed to a Christocentrism). What is the case, though, is that at the core of Barth's anthropology stands the Spirit-filled Jesus. It is because of Jesus that anthropology cannot be severed from soteriology and pneumatology. Jesus Christ reveals life in the Spirit because he alone possesses it in its fullness.<sup>34</sup>

The relationship of the Spirit to Christ Barth begins to expound in Volume I/2, where he moves from speaking of the Spirit as such to speaking of the Spirit in relationship to the Word. Thus in Chapter II, Part III, 'The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit', in many ways mirrors Part II, 'The Incarnation of the Word': as Jesus Christ is the objective reality and possibility of revelation, so the Spirit is the subjective reality and possibility of revelation. It is this that guides Barth's understanding of the Spirit's activity for man: as the Spirit is the power of God, enabling the Word to become flesh, so the Spirit is the power of God uniting man with God. This is no mere imagined analogy, for this work of the Spirit in man is simply the actualisation in him of what is already a reality in Jesus Christ. As God is free for and pronounces his 'Yes' to man in Jesus Christ, so man is freed for and pronounces his 'Yes' to God in the Holy Spirit. Thus there is no deification of man, if by that is meant man's transformation into another holy spirit. This is why Paul twice makes the equation  $\piνεῦμα$  is  $κύριος$  (2 Cor. 3:17-8). Even if there is some totalitarianism, it has to be said that Barth is seeking in this for the presence of the Spirit not to be destructive of man, but one that establishes his being as a being in genuine encounter with God. The Spirit is God's own divine presence in man, enabling man to say 'Yes' to God's 'Yes' over all creation spoken in Jesus Christ. God speaks to man through his Word and is heard by him through his Spirit. Thus human freedom finds its root and existence in the divine freedom: as God is free in the Spirit to reflect himself in man, so man is freed, in the same Spirit, to be in the likeness of God. As the divine power for the coexistence of God and man, the Holy Spirit brings God's freedom and man's to genuine encounter. The Spirit is the principle of encounter. This is the true work of the divine breath breathed out at Pentecost but typified in Eden: bringing man to the life which is communion with God. Man's freedom for God is wholly the work of the divine breath upon him, and not the innate ability of the created dust as such. This is the import of his affirmation of the Spiritual conception of Jesus, establishing the Spirit's divine primacy in the uniting of

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. CD IV/2, 323ff.



man to the Word of God because of the Spirit's prior role in uniting the human nature of Jesus to the Word. This work of the Spirit in the birth of Christ, uniting man with God in the Word is what makes it possible that flesh – man – might exist for God.

The work of the Spirit on Jesus Christ does not end with the conception, however. It is by the Spirit that the incarnate Word in Jesus of Nazareth is enabled to be obedient to God for man. By the Spirit, and in analogy to the obedience of Jesus Christ, the man in Christ is enabled to be obedient to his identity as one elected in Jesus Christ. As such, the Spirit is the power for all the obedience of man. Thus the Spirit is the one who acts not only on man, but also in man, working the obedience of faith which is man's answering 'Yes' to his election by God. As man lives by his constant breathing in of the life-giving Spirit, so he only exists in obedience to God by ongoing dependence on the Spirit. Whatever else we might say, it does seem unfair to caricature Barth's man as a merely passive receptacle of the active Spirit of God.

Man in Christ discovers that he is real man in that the Spirit of the one really real man, Jesus Christ, is at work in him, enabling him to be a man for God. In the Spirit he is not only objectively (ontologically), but also subjectively (noetically) free for God as God is free for him. Christian existence is therefore essentially messianic, for it is with the Spirit of the anointed one that the believer is given his freedom for God. The work of the Spirit on the anointed one is the objective reality of the divine election, subjectively appreciated by the same movement of the Spirit in the becoming of the children of God. By the Spirit, Jesus is the Christ, the head with his communal body, the *totus Christus*. Thus the Spirit repeats his eternal function within the Trinity of assuring the divine community as he assures the unity of its creaturely counterpart, the *totus Christus*.<sup>35</sup> Here – and only here – the Holy Spirit achieves the unity between the creature and God.

Barth seeks to make it quite clear that there is a real relationship between man and God through the Spirit in the divine-human person of Jesus Christ when he affirms that Jesus' uniqueness is to be found in his special relationship to the Spirit, and not in any innate superhuman ability to be found within his flesh. Nor, to refute the charge of Eutychianism, was the man Jesus able simply to appropriate the divine powers of the Word at will, overcoming his native limitations and so, in effect, disappearing into the Word. The Word, instead, truly became flesh. This 'flesh' can simply be used as a neutral term for man's created mode of being as an animal form of existence.

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<sup>35</sup> CD II/1, 670; IV/3, 760

However, σάρξ does also bear more sinister connotations, denoting the very fabric of man's being as a being affected by the fall, under the judgment and verdict of God.

It indicates the condition of man in contradiction, in disorder and in consequent sickness, man after Adam's fall, the man who lives a fleeting life in the neighbourhood of death and corruption. Flesh is man, or soul and body, without the Logos.<sup>36</sup>

What then of the Logos becoming flesh? If this is to happen truly and not merely as a phantasm, the Logos has to put himself on the side of his own adversary. Thus, Barth (through the influence of H. R. Mackintosh) traces the argument of the Scottish theologian and pastor, Edward Irving (1792-1834) to assert that the Logos was incarnated, not in a sinless, prelapsarian form, but in the likeness (ἐν ὁμοιώματι) of sinful flesh (σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας). Jesus is found in the familiar being of man as a being affected by sickness, death and corruption (a nature not to be confused with an actual culpable sinfulness and concupiscence).<sup>37</sup>

There is a significant difference that must be noted between the logic of Irving's thought and that of Barth (especially in his mature thought), even if the end result is much the same. That is, Irving did not believe in Jesus Christ as the ontologically primary man (even if he did see his humanity as determinative). For Irving, before the incarnation of the Son there existed a concrete form of human nature: that of fallen flesh. Therefore it was only this that the Word could assume. Or, as Irving himself put it, 'there was no other in existence to take'.<sup>38</sup> For Barth, conversely, the Son does not assume a humanity already determined by another. Human, fleshly nature is primarily and properly his. It is us, and not him, that are born into a humanity that has already been pre-determined. Thus it was not, for Barth, that there was no other flesh than sinful flesh for the Word to assume. Instead, Jesus Christ revealed in himself God's eternal elective decree as God's covenant partner by defeating sin in the flesh. In Jesus Christ, before Adam's existence, sin in man has been dealt with. That this is a drastic reorientation and relocation of the traditional doctrine of the fall is not our concern here

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<sup>36</sup> CD III/2, 335

<sup>37</sup> CD I/2, 151

<sup>38</sup> Irving, E., *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving* Vol. 5, ed. G. Carlyle (London: A. Strahan, 1864), 115

(though it is one to which we shall return in the next chapter). Our concern is with the Christology that is determining man's existence.

To return to that, it can be seen that in this whole-hearted acceptance of the Word's assumption of sinful flesh, the Docetic and Manichean argument (that, since our flesh is sinful, Christ adopted a spectral likeness of our human nature, but not the actual substance) is effectively turned on its head. In consequence the incarnation can be set in contrast with the avatars of Isis, Osiris, Buddha and Zoroaster. God's becoming flesh is not merely the Word's becoming a hero or even a man, as with the religions. It is the assumption of the adversarial state of man in order to reconcile it: τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον.<sup>39</sup>

On this basis, Barth felt able to scorn what is effectively Irenaeus' account of Jesus' incarnate being when he writes of

Luther's refusal to realise the application of the words of Is. 52<sup>14</sup> and 53<sup>2</sup> to the personal form of Christ: *quia fuit integer, sanissimi corporis, mudissimae carnis, sine peccato conceptus* (*Enarr. 53 cap. Iesariae* 1544 E. A. ex. op. lat. 23, 457). So too, on the basis of passages like Ps. 45<sup>3</sup> and Col. 1<sup>18</sup>, Lutheran dogmaticians thought to ascribe specifically to Christ's human nature a *singularis animae et corporis excellentia ac ἐξοχή qua reliquos homines superavit*, supreme health (*summam bonam et aequabilem corporis temperiem seu habitudinem*), immortality, and *summam formae elegantiam ac venustatem* (Quenstedt, *Theol. did. pol.* 1685 III c. 3 m. I sect. I, thes. 14 and 16).<sup>40</sup>

Such a Christ, Barth maintains, untainted by the fall, would not be a brother in our human condition. He would be less than fully human, left hanging between heaven and earth unable to sympathise with us or even to redeem us. An unfallen flesh would instead serve as a *cordon sanitaire* between the saviour and ourselves, meaning that our 'old self' or 'sinful body' did not die.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as Thomas Weinandy argues in his development of Barth's thesis, throwing the theological grenade first aimed at Luther's

<sup>39</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius* (Ep. CI)

<sup>40</sup> CD I/2, 153; cf. Irenaeus, Frag. 8 ('as the ark [of the covenant] was gilded within and without with pure gold, so was also the body of Christ pure and resplendent; for it was adorned within by the Word, and shielded without by the Spirit') and Frag. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gunton, C. E., *Theology through the Theologians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 159



doctrine of justification, if Jesus is not like us in his fallenness, then his 'identity with us becomes little more than a legal fiction'.<sup>42</sup>

So something akin to the patristic doctrine of a 'physical' redemption is drawn up. In the constitution of the human person of Jesus the Logos assumes the chaos of flesh. Yet, this flesh is the flesh of the one who breathes the air of the life-giving Spirit. Thus in the very act of the assumption of flesh, something happens for and in the flesh of which otherwise and in itself it is incapable:

The flesh, which in itself is disobedient, becomes obedient. The flesh, which in itself profits nothing, becomes a purposeful instrument. The flesh, which in itself is lost, attains a determination and a hope. The flesh, which in itself is illogical and irrational, becomes logical and rational.... This is the triumph of the meaning of the human existence of Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

The issue of key importance here, though, is not the associate soteriology, but the model it gives of God's relationship to man through the Spirit. Following the lead set in the Christology of the Puritan theologian John Owen, that the Word never acted directly on his own human nature but only through the Spirit, Irving could thus depict Jesus as truly, normatively, and prototypically human. The reason Christ was able to resist temptation was not because he was divine, but because of the Holy Spirit's help. 'Christ's soul was so held in possession by the Holy Ghost', he said, 'that it never assented unto an evil suggestion, and never originated an evil suggestion.'<sup>44</sup> Members of Irving's congregation were thus shown that they could resist sin just as Jesus did for, on earth, he was exactly as they were. 'Christ's life from his baptism to his agony is our

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<sup>42</sup> Weinandy, T., *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 45. Through these comments by Colin Gunton and Thomas Weinandy, as well as in the works of C. E. B. Cranfield, T. F. and J. B. Torrance and others (see especially McFarlane, G. W. P., *Edward Irving, Christology and the Spirit* (PhD: University of London, 1990), it can be seen that Barth effectively managed to foster a significant resurgence of interest in Irving's Christology. In the scramble for orthodoxy patristic theology is all too often this battle's epicentre. Irenaeus is one key witness, and understandably so, given his famed aphorism ('the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.' [AH 5.pref]; cf. Weinandy, 26-8). Yet, as we have seen, it has to be said that to conclude that Irenaeus – who would most emphatically speak of Christ's 'righteous flesh' (AH 5.14.2; cf. 3.21.10; 5.12.3-4) – thought that incarnation entailed the assumption of sinful flesh is to stretch his theology out of all shape and recognition. To give another instance, in the foreword to Weinandy's *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, Colin Gunton asks what, as a Roman Catholic, Weinandy can do with the official doctrine of the immaculate conception, which (however erroneous) stands as testimony to the traditional nature of the view of Christ's unfallen flesh (Weinandy, x).

<sup>43</sup> CD III/2, 336; cf. I/2, 40

<sup>44</sup> Irving, *Collected Writings*, 137

model of the liberty and power of the Holy Ghost'.<sup>45</sup> Correspondingly, Barth's Jesus of Nazareth could be said to be in relationship to the Word of God only through the Spirit, as his body the Church is. The flesh of the Word is, in fact, autokinetic by the Spirit.

There are a number of questions we might put to this Christology, quite apart from whether it can legitimately be said that the 'likeness' of sinful flesh in fact means the actuality of sinful flesh. For, if we are to admit the equation, then we have, with the utmost significance, made our doctor himself a patient.<sup>46</sup> The first is: what is the necessary point of contact between God and humanity that makes reconciliation and mediation possible? Is it fallen human nature? Or is such argument simply a repetition of the old error of the Quest for the historical (human) Jesus: determining the nature of his being by projecting our own nature onto him? It has to be said that this use of Nazianzen's maxim – τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον – is at least confusing. Gregory was responding to Apollinarianism. The burden of proof then falls on those who would extend his logic to the necessity of assuming specifically fallen nature. In other words, as Apollinarius was condemned for denying Christ's fleshly mind, is it right to be condemned for denying Christ's sinful flesh? Certainly such 'logical extension' of Nazianzen's argument is a slippery slope. Christina Baxter, for example, asks in *Atonement Today*, 'is it the case that as Jesus has not assumed female humanity, therefore female humanity is not redeemed?'<sup>47</sup> Following Irving's 'logical extension' of Nazianzen's axiom, the question has become valid.

A more immediately pertinent question arises in the necessary proviso of Irving (and so Barth) that the *person* of Christ remained holy. Christ's nature is thus so independent of the person that the person is not implicated. Irving insists: 'whenever I attribute sinful properties and dispositions and inclinations to our Lord's human nature, I am speaking of it considered as apart from Him, in itself.'<sup>48</sup> Bishop Kallistos of Diocletia notes that here Irving is developing a distinction made by Nestorius between the levels of nature and person.<sup>49</sup> To this we might ask: can a person's ontology be so

<sup>45</sup> Irving, *Collected Writings*, 237

<sup>46</sup> James Torrance seems prepared to admit even more than this equation, by simply transferring Jesus out of the surgery and in to the sick ward: 'Christ does not heal by standing over against us, diagnosing our sickness... as a doctor might. No, He becomes the patient!' (Torrance, J.B., 'The Vicarious Humanity of Christ' in *The Incarnation* ed. T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 141) It is, perhaps, ironic that Jesus in all three synoptics specifically chooses to refer to himself as a doctor (Matt. 9:12, Mk. 2:17, Lk. 5:31).

<sup>47</sup> Baxter, C., 'Jesus the Man and Women's Salvation' in *Atonement Today* ed. J. Goldingay (London: SPCK, 1995), 138

<sup>48</sup> Irving, *Collected Writings*, 565

<sup>49</sup> Bishop Kallistos of Diocletia, *The Humanity of Christ. The Fourth Constantinople Lecture* (Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, 1985)

split from his actions? No doubt every sinner would wish it were true of him. Yet is it really possible to have such a divorce? In fact, is this Nestorian distinction not simply the open door to a Nestorian Christology? If Barth defines flesh as man without the Logos, this Christology seems to steal its own supposed reconciliatory effects by the back door, for man – even in Christ – remains divorced from the Logos.

In defence of Barth's Christology, George Hunsinger observes that Barth quite deliberately alternates back and forth between an Alexandrian idiom (that which, when unbalanced, is always in danger of veering into docetism) and an Antiochene idiom (that which, when unbalanced, is always in danger of veering into Nestorianism).<sup>50</sup> And Barth himself is clear that this is the only way in which to be properly Chalcedonian in Christology, following the New Testament's own diversity of idioms. For there we 'are dealing with testimonies to one reality, which, though contrary to one another, do not dispute or negate each other.... Rather do they mutually supplement and explain each other and to that extent remain on peaceful terms.'<sup>51</sup> Hunsinger is correct to rescue Barth from Charles Waldrop's forced option between Alexandria and Antioch.<sup>52</sup> The existence of Chalcedonian Christology prevents any such stark alternative, and Barth is highly aware of that. However, that said, for all Hunsinger's loyalty, Barth's explicit avowals of Chalcedon do not necessarily amount to a truly Chalcedonian Christology. Even if Chalcedon does allow room for significant variation of idiom, it is still possible to lurch between those elements of Alexandrian and Antiochene thought that are declared anathema by the council. The question is, whether Barth is guilty of such and so of endangering man's relationship to God.

On the one hand, his adoption of Irving's Christology is in great danger of no longer having the Spirit as the mediator between God and man, but as the actual, much despised, *cordon sanitaire*. The person's sharp distinction (even alienation) from his own nature – the Word's distinction from his own flesh – may have created room for 'relationship', but at what expense for the unity of the person of Christ? Irenaeus would most certainly have seen this as too high a price to pay. If there is to be one Lord Jesus Christ, then such relationship cannot exist.

On the other hand, such distinction also goes against the grain of his ongoing philippic (in the doctrine of the eternal λόγος ἑνσαρκος) against the naked second

<sup>50</sup> Hunsinger, G., 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character' in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 131-147

<sup>51</sup> CD I/2, 24

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Waldrop, C. T., *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin: Mouton, 1984)



person of the Trinity. When speaking in this, much more Alexandrian, idiom, Barth even seems to recognise how perilously close he is to a Eutychian form of Christology. He thus denies that Godhead has taken the place of manhood in the person of Jesus Christ, or that manhood is, as it were, swallowed up or extinguished by Godhead, and yet he feels that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus 'seems to melt into the divine Subject and therefore to disappear as a human Subject.'<sup>53</sup> It is no wonder that he was required so repeatedly to seize opportunities to reject docetism itself and the charge of docetism in his Christology. By Chapter XVI especially, the humanity of Jesus really does look overwhelmed and engulfed by the more abstract concept of what he called 'the humanity of God' in God's turning to man. T. F. Torrance (who has followed the broad outlines of the more Antiochene elements in Barth's Christology) was concerned by this, and raised the matter with Barth himself shortly before his death. He concludes: the "'suspicion of docetism" in what Barth had written about the ascended humanity of Jesus inevitably raised questions in some quarters about how he really regarded the humanity of the pre-resurrection Jesus!'<sup>54</sup>

Hunsinger's appraisal of Barth's Christology as 'basically Chalcedonian in character' may, then, have been too optimistic, unless the word 'basic' is used in a different sense. In practice he manages simultaneously to drive a wedge between the Word and his assumed flesh, and to subsume man into God in the person of Jesus Christ. The result is highly ironic for Barth: far from having rescued Jesus Christ from the speculators, he has to all intents and purposes etherealised humanity. As to whether man can, in the end, be said to have a relationship with God in all this, the answer has to be negative. Man is either isolated from God or annihilated by his presence.

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<sup>53</sup> CD III/2, 65; cf. 207; IV/4, 163

<sup>54</sup> Torrance, T. F., *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 134

### Man as Soul and Body

Having (necessarily) first looked at man in his being *ad extra*, we can now proceed to look at man, so to speak, in himself, as he is found in the creaturely form of soul and body. Barth is ardent in his insistence that soul is the life of man aroused by the Spirit, and is not to be confused with some kind of prolongation or continuation of that divine action in which God creatively approaches man in the Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Yet, as seen first in the Word's becoming flesh, Spirit is the principle of man's being as embodied soul and besouled body. An exposition of Barth's understanding of and distinction between body and soul, therefore, can only be made in the light of the Spirit, and so within the context of intersubjectivity. Spirit is the context and basis for man as the soul of his body.

Barth provides a summary of his thought on man's being as soul and body that can serve as a helpful introduction:

Man is (1) creaturely life – life which by the will and act of the living God is awakened, created and called into temporal existence as the individual life of a body. He is *living* being. And he is (2) creaturely being – being which by the will and act of the same God has a certain spatial form or besouled body. He is *living being*. To put it in another way, he is (1) there, and has existence, and in this respect is soul; and he is (2) there in a certain manner and has a nature, and in this respect is body.<sup>56</sup>

It is not that the soul is to be equated with the I, and the body left to be the mere vehicle in which this I can encounter a Thou. It is that soul is the temporal dynamic, and body the spatial dynamic, in which the I can live as a being in encounter. Man has a creaturely life and a creaturely being. The former refers to the soul and the latter to the body. Creaturely life involves living and so represents and is man's temporal existence. His bodily being represents and is the spatial form of that temporal living.

We can immediately see the robustness of his doctrine of the body in the way in which Barth portrays the body as the inalienable spatial complement of the soul. Soul as movement in time would simply be a nonsensical concept without a place in which

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<sup>55</sup> CD III/2, 372

<sup>56</sup> CD III/2, 367, original italics

that movement might occur. Life itself cannot be mere internal, abstract or independent being. There must be *something* living. Soul therefore presupposes a body whose soul it is (which material matter then becomes organic). A soul without a body would be in bondage in the sense that it would have no being in space. Such life would, in effect, be lifeless. To be bodiless, then, is to be life-negating.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, to be bodiless is to be life-negating to more than just the 'I', for the body is the person as he is available not just to himself, but also to others. Man has awareness of others as he has body, for body is his openness and availability to others; it is the person as object.<sup>58</sup> Using G. W. F. Hegel's famous section on domination and slavery in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Robert Jenson expands on this theme of the body as object and availability, coupling it with Barth's avowal of the need for mutuality in relations, to conclude that to be bodiless is not only to be life-negating, but to be enslaving to the potential Thou of the I.

If in our mutual relation, I am a subject of which you are an object, but withhold myself from being reciprocally an object for you, you are in so far enslaved to me. Only if you are able to intend and deal with me as I do with you, can we both be free. Thus a disembodied personal presence cannot bless but only curse other persons.<sup>59</sup>

All of which is embedded in Christ's embodiment, without which we would be left with a bodiless God who would not be God for us or God with us, but only God against us.

Yet it is not an isolated doctrine of the body that Barth set himself to chart. In and for itself, but also against both traditional anthropological dualism and modern anthropological reductionism, whether of a materialist or spiritual kind, he seeks to uphold the psychosomatic unity of the whole man, the soul of his body. The psychical and physical cannot then be severed, such that if a man's somatic organs fail to function properly he may continue to live an unaffected life in the 'upper storey' of his soul, or such that if a man's soul were to be removed or annihilated, he may continue to live an unaffected life in the 'lower storey' of his body. The question of man's healing, then, needs to be phrased as follows: 'Wilt thou be made whole?' (John 5:6), and must

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<sup>57</sup> CD III/2, 352f., 373

<sup>58</sup> CD III/2, 401

<sup>59</sup> Jenson, R. W., 'The Church and the Sacraments' in Gunton, C. E., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 211



not be taken to mean ‘Wilt thou have healthy limbs or be free of their sickness?’.<sup>60</sup> To present man as such a whole being Barth is forced to reject the view summarily called Greek (but actually also a traditionally Christian view) of soul and body as two qualitatively different parts of man, the soul being spiritual, non-spatial, indissoluble, immortal, and the body being material, spatial, dissoluble and mortal. This traditional view is such that both parts can be severed from each other upon death, waiting for their reunion in the resurrection (the so-called ‘intermediate state’). Instead, as soul of his body, man ‘is neither in a foreign land, nor in a prison, nor even in a vessel, but wholly in his own house and wholly himself.’<sup>61</sup> The concept of the whole man also requires him to reject not only what he perceives as this dualism, but also monism, whether it be monistic materialism (in which the one substance of man is his corporeality) or monistic spiritualism, which takes the opposite view, that Spirit is the only true substance of human reality. Materialism, with its denial of the soul, can only render man subjectless – he can no longer be an I. Spiritualism, with its denial of the body, can only render man objectless – he can no longer be a Thou. Furthermore, the folly of these positions can be seen in their effective impersonation of death with its removal of the very Spirit that gives life to man as soul of his body. With no such uniting Spirit, the soul and body of a man must war and divorce.<sup>62</sup> One example is instructive: the monism of Mary Baker Eddy’s self-styled ‘Christian Science’. This entire schema is built upon a quite peculiar doctrine of the *imago Dei*, that, since man is the image of a perfect God, so too man himself must be a perfect being. Sickness, therefore, can be but an illusion, an altered mental state of the eternal mind of man. Even death is simply a mere disappearance from our level of consciousness. Effectively the body of such an eternal man is then an illusion. Barth concludes: ‘[w]hether Christian Science is really “science” need not occupy us here. But there can be no doubt that it is not ‘Christian’ science.’<sup>63</sup>

Yet again, Barth does not wish to deduce all this from scientific or cultural studies. His exposition of the ‘whole man’ is worked out from and set upon his

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<sup>60</sup> CD III/4, 359

<sup>61</sup> CD III/2, 426. We shall see in the next chapter that, having established Jesus as Lord of time, Barth has so re-oriented his eschatology as effectively to circumvent the traditional question of the ‘intermediate state’. Thus he can maintain consistency with his doctrine of the whole man, for otherwise within the parameters of the traditional model, soul and body being so necessarily and inseparably connected, there could be no continuity between the ‘now’ of the present age, and the ‘not yet’ of the resurrection. Instead of simply replacing the traditional soul/body parallelism with another, that between the two ages, he has proposed Jesus, the mediator between time and eternity, as our future and hope.

<sup>62</sup> CD III/2, 380ff.

<sup>63</sup> CD III/4, 365

Christology. Jesus Christ (that is, the *totus Christus*, with his body and in the flesh) is real man in that he is whole man.<sup>64</sup> To understand the whole man, he must be seen in the light of the real man, the relationship between God and man, and the relationship between man and man, seen and found in Jesus Christ. Though clearly the soul is not the creator of the body, the constitution of Jesus Christ's being as man is a 'repetition, imitation and correlation' of the 'relationship' between the Word of God and his creaturely constitution.<sup>65</sup> Whilst he seems uncomfortable with describing the soul as 'tabernacled' in the body, Barth's language concerning the ordering of soul and body does, unsurprisingly then, seem to have something of a Chalcedonian feel to it. According to the *Leitsatz* to §46, man is the soul of his body – 'wholly and simultaneously both, in ineffaceable difference, inseparable unity, and indestructible order.'<sup>66</sup> That there should ever be any friction or distance between the body and the soul in which either is opposed to, triumphs over, or resists the other, is due entirely to the being of humanity in its rebellion against and so alienation from the Spirit and the Logos. It is the nature of fallen flesh, and not the nature of God's good creation, that prevents man being whole. Yet in Jesus is found one whole cosmic man, embodied soul and besouled body, a formed and ordered totality, not a chaotic composite being existing as the union of two parts. This he sees being illustrated linguistically from the New Testament witness to Christ: where Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25 can speak of Jesus Christ giving himself (ἐαυτόν) for our sins, in Matt. 20:28; Jn. 10:11, 15; 15:13; 1 Jn. 3:16 it is his soul (ψυχή) that he gives as a ransom for the Church. Then again, in Lk. 22:19; Rom. 7:4; Col. 1:22; Heb. 10:10; 1 Pet. 2:24 it is his body (σῶμα) which is given as the sacrifice.<sup>67</sup> Clearly there is no conflict within him, but a unity. What is more, at no point does the New Testament contain any hint of a liberation of Jesus as object (in his body) from Jesus as subject (in his soul). Nor can Jesus the accused glutton and drunkard be shown to be an ascetic at war with his own body. As the one filled without limit with the Spirit that is the bond of union between the two levels of man's being, such possibilities are precluded. He is the integrated subject of his own object and object of his own subject. He wills and fulfils himself so that a humanity divided by the flesh might be united in him.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. *CD* III/2, 340f.

<sup>65</sup> *CD* III/2, 341

<sup>66</sup> *CD* III/2, 325

<sup>67</sup> *CD* III/2, 328

His whole being consists in the event in which soul and body come into formation and order, in which chaos is left behind and cosmos is realised, and in which the flesh is slain in its old form and is quickened and comes alive in its new – and all this by and from out of itself.<sup>68</sup>

The relationship between soul and body in Jesus is in fact so broadly determinative that Barth feels that with our knowledge of Jesus Christ as the whole man we find ourselves at the centre of all Christian knowledge, not simply the knowledge of man. For that relationship – Jesus in his simultaneous objectivity and subjectivity – is both comparable to and illuminative of a number of other relationships core to theology. It has already been seen that for man to be a logical cosmos there must be an ordering between the two moments of soul and body corresponding to the Word's rule of his creaturely nature (heaven's rule of earth). Only then, in that reception of the Word and Spirit that transforms the divisive flesh to make the whole man can man be logical. What has not yet been seen is that, as the preceding soul of a succeeding body, man can be seen only to be fulfilled as a duality, just as man is only fulfilled with the being of woman. The body is the subordinate logic of the soul, the soul's other, the *signum* of man's *res*, corresponding to the creation and the female. The first and most certain and clear relationship analogous to the relationship between soul and body in Jesus, then, is the relationship between Christ the head and his body, the Church. Yet Jesus as soul and body also seems, he feels, to be illustrative (and determinative?) of the relationship between heaven and earth (even though it may not necessarily be further supposed that man as soul of his body is the microcosm), justification and sanctification, law and gospel, faith and works, preaching and sacrament, confessional formula and corresponding attitude and action, Church and state.<sup>69</sup>

Evidently these are not issues of merely nugatory significance in Barth's thinking. It is of utmost importance in that case, having established the manner in which he relates the inner ordering of man to other relationships, to determine to what extent Barth has managed to construct a sufficient model of the whole man and his psychosomatic makeup.

The question and consequences of the lack of any serious doctrine of space in his anthropology is one that has already been raised (and one that can receive further

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<sup>68</sup> CD III/2, 337

<sup>69</sup> CD III/2, 341-4, 427



and fuller attention in the next chapter). We must turn to it again here, though, to ask: if the soul is man's creaturely life of temporal existence, and the body his spatial form of that temporal living, why does Barth feel he can devote so much space in Chapter X to a doctrine of time without giving any such time to an equally weighted doctrine of space? With the doctrines of time and space being considered so independent that one can be addressed without the other, a schism does seem to be secreted within the whole man, between his temporal living and spatial form.<sup>70</sup> Daniel Price seems, indirectly, to recognise this in his judgment that, in the end, Barth's pneumatology does not seem robust enough to hold together the whole man. When Barth proposes that the Spirit of God is the basis of the unity of the body and soul, he says, 'it sounds nearly as if he is calling on a "God of the gaps" to solve the mind-body problem.'<sup>71</sup> That may be. However, the problem is yet more serious. If Barth is right in thinking that every trivialisation of the body is in point of fact a trivialisation of the soul, then his marginalisation of any doctrine of space can only, in the end, constitute a marginalisation of man himself as the soul of his body. This is not to say that Barth has failed to construct a substantial doctrine of the body – far from it, as we have seen. Rather it is that the numerous tangible benefits his doctrine of the body incorporates are in constant danger of leaking out, there being no auxiliary doctrine of space muscular enough to retain them.

Jürgen Moltmann has another equally serious charge to put to Barth on this point. That is, Barth's view of the subjugation of the body to the soul (as the flesh of the man Jesus is subjugated to the Word, as earth is to heaven, as woman is to man) is simply one form of the whole of Western anthropological theory, a theory that moves inevitably towards inter-personal, societal domination. Barth calls the ordering of soul and body 'indestructible' in part because of its analogous relationship to God's relationship of dominion (which Moltmann reads as 'domination') towards the world. This analogy Moltmann dismisses as a fabrication, setting out instead what he feels to be the actual and historical impetus behind Barth's model. In the Platonism that so pervaded patristic anthropology, whilst primacy was given to the soul, the body was the prison of that soul and so to be escaped. In a less extreme way, Philo of Alexandria

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<sup>70</sup> This separation is almost certainly rooted in Barth's earlier refusal to see God's omnipresence and eternity as parallels, a refusal that John Colwell has argued relies on an arbitrary distinction between the two that effectively abstracts eternity from the incarnation by seeing God's eternity, and not his omnipresence, as "an attribute of God's freedom as such" (CD II/1, 465) (Colwell, J. E., *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford, 1989), 33).

<sup>71</sup> Price, 257

saw the *imago Dei* as a referent to the mind (God being the mind of the universe). Thus the human mind is related to the body in a way analogous to the divine mind's relation to the universe, which analogy Barth also sees and upholds.<sup>72</sup> Could Barth in effect be downgrading the body as an integral part of man's being in the *imago Dei*? If Moltmann is right in his case, it would appear so. But to move on through his historical argument: in mediaeval anthropology the Aristotelian view that the body is formed by the soul was determinative. Is Barth's rendition of the human being as 'soul of his body' just a simple appropriation of the Aristotelian-Thomist definition *anima forma corporis*? In modern European anthropology it is the expositions of Descartes and Lamettrie, giving the conscious mind power and ownership over the instrument of the body.<sup>73</sup> To view Barth's anthropology as an extension or product of such cultural forces is, of course, an implicit critique of Barth's claim to have founded his exposition of the human constitution Christologically. As such, Moltmann holds that to see and describe the person of Jesus as the definitive soul ruling its own body is merely eisegetical imposition.<sup>74</sup>

But is this 'inner sovereignty' and self-control really the outstanding characteristic of the human being Jesus? Can the struggle in Gethsemane be interpreted in those terms? One has the impression that in this passage Barth is adopting Schleiermacher's Christology, with its thesis about Jesus' 'always dominant consciousness of God'.<sup>75</sup>

The result, for Moltmann, can only be one in which the reasonable soul dominates the body and feelings, giving no right to resistance or to a say in the decision making of the person. Harmony between the body and its dominating soul is not even something to be desired, for the ordering between the two is not only indestructible but gracious. The soul not only does, but must dominate the body. In place of so disturbingly dictatorial an anthropology, Moltmann posits perichoretic mutual affection instead of subjugation by the one of the other. And since the relationship between the soul and

<sup>72</sup> Philo, *De opificio mundi*, 69. It is worth noting Margaret Barker's remarkable caution here, however: 'Philo, as I shall show, drew his theology from the most ancient traditions of Israel and not from an amalgam of hellenized Judaism and contemporary Greek philosophy, as is so often suggested.' (Barker, M., *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 48).

<sup>73</sup> Moltmann, J., *God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation* trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 1985), 247ff.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. CD III/2, 332

<sup>75</sup> Moltmann, 352-3, n.30

body is analogous to the relationship between male and female, even God and his creation, Moltmann must implicitly be advocating such perichoretic mutuality between the sexes and between the Creator and his creation. As the soul is affected by the body and vice versa, so God is affected by his creation.

Many of Moltmann's questions seem valid, and much of what he says is true. Yet is this critique fair for Barth himself? The fact is, Barth does hold to the soul feeling and thinking by use of the body, as can be seen in his analysis of what, biblically, the 'heart' is. So, he says, 'it must not be forgotten that to the body (according to Ps. 22<sup>15</sup>, 39<sup>4</sup>; Prov. 14<sup>30</sup>) there belongs also the heart, and therefore the human personality. Man does not possess but is that which he is fashioned out of the earth.'<sup>76</sup> The 'heart' is what it is anatomically. Yet, having seen the command to circumcise the heart and the demand for purity of heart, he can also see that the 'heart' represents or is more than just a somatic organ. This body part is very much at the heart of man's living being. Thus, he can conclude,

the heart is not merely a but the reality of man, both wholly of soul and wholly of body. Who would want to say from his heart that it is the one more or less than the other or without the other? Of this term which in the first instance is wholly physical, but is then given in the Bible a content which is wholly of soul, we are forced to say that it speaks with particular plainness of the order in which man is soul and body, or man as a rational being.<sup>77</sup>

There is an indestructible ordering within man. Yet to see Barth's exposition as just another domination by dualism is to miss the genuine complexity he builds in as reflective of the real complexity of the being of man made known in Jesus Christ. If Barth has in the end marginalised the body, it is not because of his doctrine of the coordination of the body and soul.

A contrast that is illuminative of Barth's contribution to the subject of the whole man is that with Augustinian anthropology, in which the likeness to the triune God can be found within each individual. If one is determined to find it, there is something that might vaguely resemble Augustine's type of 'trinity' in Barth's whole man: by the Spirit, man in his being as subject and man in his being as object are held together in

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<sup>76</sup> CD III/1, 245

<sup>77</sup> CD III/2, 436



unity.<sup>78</sup> However, some most vital differences to Augustine's anthropology can be seen, reflective of Barth's insistence on man's finding his very being in encounter. Not only does the Spirit in Barth's thinking remain the Spirit of God even as the spirit of man, but also – and most significantly – in great improvement on Augustine's containment of that likeness to the mind or soul, Barth takes the body into man's being in the likeness of God. Man, when real in the *imago Dei*, is the soul of his body. Augustine's model had not only made the soul so overweight that the body would perish of theological malnutrition, but it had also effectively reduced the Trinity to a mathematical nicety. When the mark of the Trinity is only stamped on the inner being of the person, the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit cannot be reflected in anything other than internal self-relatedness. The person all too quickly becomes impersonal, an individual with little 'history' outside of his own constant introspection.<sup>79</sup> It is the way in which Barth successfully managed to break free of such internality to see man as a being in encounter that is worth elaborating on now.

This difference to Augustine has to be listed as one of the great benefits Karl Barth has brought to subsequent anthropology. That is, he sought to incorporate what theological anthropology has all too often balked at, namely the external nature, the physicality, of the inner being of man. This is the indispensable correlative of man's being as a being in encounter. It has to be said that – perhaps particularly in the Reformed tradition – physicality has all too often been undervalued in being regarded as 'merely external', externality being equated not with relationality but peripherality. Yet if our external form is not the form of our very being, then (as in Irving) our behaviour cannot be anything more than incidentally related to us. Act and being must then be divorced.

In reaction to this, Barth turned to the kind of thinking embodied in F. C. Oetinger's aphorism 'corporeality is the end of all the ways of God'.<sup>80</sup> From his earlier, complete acceptance of the words, he came to a more nuanced judgment, rejecting it as dogma *per se*, but feeling that Oetinger had managed to express a very necessary opposition to the flight of the Enlightenment spirit from nature. From the constitution of Adam by the LORD God in the second creation account, the body is

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XI

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Gunton, C. E., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 102-3

<sup>80</sup> CD I/1, 134; cf. II/1, 268. 'Those responsible for the *Gesamtausgabe* make it clear that the sentence should actually say: "Corporeality is the end of the Work of God [...]," which Barth apparently was not aware of. He quoted from memory.' (Jehle, F., *Ever Against the Stream: The Politics of Karl Barth, 1906-1968* (Grand Rapids, Mi. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 35, n. 32)

shown to be no prison or peripheral organ, but the very nature of man. It is worth quoting Barth at some length here as he expounds the relevant section of that narrative.

The creation of man described in Genesis differs from the Enuma Elish, the Orphic myth of Dionysus and the Titans, and other similar cosmogonies in its strong emphasis on creatureliness. In each of the alternatives, man is formed from the blood of the slaughtered (usually evil) deity or deities. Thus man is the composition of already evil matter and divinity. Yet man is אֱדָם, taken and formed solely from the אֲדָמָה. This *homo* is not a celestial, but a terrestrial being, from the *humus* through and through. Yet not only is his divinity excluded in his formation. His configuration by the fingers of God excludes the possibility that this being should be a holy and spiritual being trapped behind profane and material walls. By the hand and breath of God man is a whole being, body and soul. His body cannot be a disgrace or prison or threat to the soul, for he is divinely willed and crafted in his totality. The only sense in which he can be a being both humiliated and exalted is in the sense that he is an object of both divine judgment and divine mercy.<sup>81</sup>

Man's inner essence is found in his external form, and his status is determined not by the matter with which he is made but by his relation to God. This is another aspect of Barth's thinking that Eberhard Jüngel has sought to elucidate (and elaborate). Jüngel notes Hegel's appreciation of the essential nature of externality:

That which Something is, it is wholly in its externality; its externality is its totality – it is equally its introreflected unity. Its Appearance is not only Reflection into other, but into self, and consequently its externality is the manifestation of that which it is in itself.<sup>82</sup>

Much of the fear in Christian dogmatics of bringing the body into man's being in the *imago Dei* has been the understandable fear of anthropomorphism. If man in his bodily form images God, then what of God? And yet it is a fear that has inevitably

<sup>81</sup> CD III/1, 243-4; cf. Rad, G. von, *Genesis: A Commentary* trans. Marks, J. H. (London: SCM, 1961), 75

<sup>82</sup> Hegel, G. W. F., *Science of Logic* (trans. London, 1929), vol. II, 159, cited in Jüngel, E., *Theological Essays I* trans. and ed., J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 137

fuelled the downgrading of the body and the dividing of man such that the image and likeness of God can be found in the human mind without its attendant body.<sup>83</sup> In response, Barth's account of the nature of body does seem to make such objections seem a little naïve and artless. For Barth, body is the person as he is available to others (and himself). So, for God to be gracious to man, God too is embodied in his approach to man (and, to avoid inconsistency, in his approach to himself, especially in the ascension). The *imago Dei*, then, can only be found in bodily form in Jesus Christ and his body.

It is interesting to see, then, the development in the thinking of Old Testament scholarship in this area immediately after Barth had written the first two part-volumes on creation. Since then there has been some considerable work done to recover the native Hebrew conception of deity and therefore *imago Dei* as witnessed in the Old Testament. For example, Gerhard von Rad is remarkably similar to Irenaeus and the patristic exegetical tradition of anthropomorphic Christophany in speaking of the form of God as he appears through the Old Testament:

Actually, Israel conceived even Jahweh himself as having human form. But the way of putting it which we use runs in precisely the wrong direction according to Old Testament ideas, for, according to the ideas of Jahwism, it cannot be said that Israel regarded God anthropomorphically, but the reverse, that she considered man as theomorphic.<sup>84</sup>

The result is that von Rad refuses to exempt man's bodily appearance from God's image in order to limit it to man's spiritual nature, dignity, personality or ability for

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Watson, F., *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 291

<sup>84</sup> The question of divine corporeality is one that will exercise us in the next chapter. For the moment, though, we may note the work of a number of biblical theologians on this topic, including Gerhard von Rad, Walter Eichrodt, Terence Fretheim, Stephen D. Moore and Francis Watson. Terence Fretheim, for instance, has picked up this tradition, most notably in *The Suffering of God*, to assert that 'it can be said unequivocally that the human form is not somehow foreign to God's Godness.' In order to substantiate this, he goes on to ask: 'Is the human form one which God *assumes* only for the sake of the appearance; or is there an essential continuity between the form and God as God is or both? It would be a mistake to move to a consideration of God as spirit in this connection. It is remarkable how seldom the OT and even the NT, uses such language to speak of God. Isa. 31:3 is sometimes cited in this connection: 'The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.' Yet, as Eichrodt indicates, this passage does not serve to set spirit over against matter, but the "inexhaustible power of the divine life" over against "the essentially transitory". The spiritual and the physical/material are not mutually exclusive categories. To speak of God as spirit does not necessarily entail formlessness.' (Fretheim, T. E., *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 102, citing Eichrodt, W., *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (London: SCM, 1961), 215. Cf. Rad, G. von, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 145; Watson, 289; Moore, S. D., *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (Routledge: New York and London, 1996))



moral decision, etc. Such limitation he finds not only one-sided but strange to the Old Testament and the Hebraic mind before its inundation with Hellenic influence.

Outside the realm of Old Testament studies, there are two theologians in particular who have sought to expand on Barth's doctrine of the body. The first is Derrick Sherwin Bailey, a fervent advocate of Barth's interpretation of the *imago Dei* as involving the relationship between man and woman. Bailey finds the ontological relation subsisting between man and woman demonstrated in the physical form of both, as reflected in the language of the creation account of Genesis 1. So, זָכָר and נְקִיבָה appear to be derived from roots denoting respectively 'the sharp one' (that is, the one with the penis) and 'the perforated one' (that is, the one with the vagina).<sup>85</sup> Thus the inner being of man is rescued from abstraction as man's being as a being in encounter is manifested in his fleshly appearance.

The second theologian is Eberhard Jüngel. Seeing himself standing in an older tradition, in continuity with a strain of patristic thinking, Jüngel finds a decisive aspect of the understanding of humanity as the image of God in Köhler's interpretation of the image as consisting in the fact of man's upright and erect form.<sup>86</sup> As with Bailey, in taking the bodily form of man seriously, Jüngel has sought to understand man's bodily form precisely. 'This only have I found', wrote Qoheleth, 'God made man upright' (Ecc 7:29). This Jüngel reads quite literally as a conclusion drawn from Genesis 1:26 that the erect form of the body is the external form of the dominion given to man. So man can bow from his naturally erect posture and so emulate the humiliation of the one who is called lord in his humiliation. Thus we can find our being in correspondence to the divine condescension in Jesus Christ. Jüngel is quite serious in his specificity, as can be seen in the distance to which he feels this line of thinking can be taken:

It is not a matter of chance that we feel that those of our fellows who are prevented from walking or holding themselves upright are especially unfortunate and pitiable. They lack freedom for the future. In antiquity they were particularly ridiculed, evidently because their existence was a disturbing

<sup>85</sup> Bailey, D. S., *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London: Longmans, 1959), 273

<sup>86</sup> Jüngel, 136ff. Cf. Köhler, L., *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: 1966); Augustine, *De Gen. ad litt.* 6.12; Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God*, VII. We might add to this tradition John Milton, as he describes Adam and Eve for the first time:

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,  
God-like erect, with native honour clad  
In naked majesty, seemed lords of all,  
And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine  
The image of their glorious Maker shone, (*Paradise Lost*, Bk IV, ll. 287-91)

marginal comment on human lordship, with the result that since they seemed externally to lack the function of lordship, they were thought to be particularly domineering. The fact that today such ridicule of those prevented from walking upright is no longer a matter of course as it was in antiquity, has something to do with the fact that Jesus Christ, whom faith calls 'Lord', was *the crucified*.<sup>87</sup>

Whatever we might make of the details of these arguments, one thing is very clear. With his refusal to disembody the real man at any stage, Barth has made it incomparably more difficult for subsequent anthropology to sideline the body. Real man is a whole man. As the creature called into being by the love of God *ad extra*, man is an essentially external, bodily being.

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<sup>87</sup> Jüngel, 139, original italics

## Conclusion

For Barth then, what is man? As the recipient of the Spirit of Christ, he reveals in his external form what he is essentially, namely a being in encounter. He is not an island but a Thou and an I, defined primarily by the divine I and secondarily by the human Thou of his fellow. Thus we see the tragedy of man's being the *homo incurvatus in se*. Yet Barth finds that this being of man *ad extra* is not unconnected to his being *ad intra*, if we can refer to it in this way, for his body is not the physical ὄργανον at the disposal of the essential soul, but the external and essential form of the self.<sup>88</sup> Bodily encounters are I-Thou encounters. When man, then, is the *homo incurvatus in se*, he can be seen physically as such, averting, like Peter, his eyes from his fellow man (Luke 22:61-2). In contrast to what might be said of his treatment of the concept in volume I/1 with regard to his doctrine of God, in his anthropology Barth has thus given a wonderfully rich exposition of the concept of πρόσωπον and its implications for man, an exposition that deserves to be highly influential.<sup>89</sup>

The concern raised in this chapter has been that for Barth to articulate this conception of man as a whole being in encounter, he must necessarily detach it from the core of his overall argument, as witnessed in the case of the πρόσωπον. To start

<sup>88</sup> Given that Barth's doctrine of the whole man is intended to be derived from his doctrine of the real man, Jesus Christ, a difference in Christology can be noted here from that of Athanasius, who famously described the human nature of Christ as the Word's ὄργανον (*De incarnatione*, 8, 9, 22, 41, 42-5).

<sup>89</sup> CD I/1, §9; cf. Torrance, A. J., *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), ch. 4. Daniel Price is one who has recently attempted to make Barth's work in this area more widely appreciated, even outside the realm of theological study, by showing it to be analogous to the object relations psychology of W. Ronald D. Fairbairn (Price, D. J., *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002)). At much the same time as Barth, Fairbairn (1889-1964) was resisting Freud's reductionism in his argument that the human psyche struggles not so much for libidinal pleasure as for object relations. Price seeks to illuminate the insistence of both Barth and Fairbairn that the human being is constituted, at a fundamental level, by relationships. It is necessary to insert a caveat here, for there is, surely, a world of difference between the psychologically formative experiences of an infant and the ontologically constitutive love of God whereby man has his being. In object relations theory the object is primarily the mother, and the relationship is merely psychologically affecting. In Barth's theological anthropology God is the subject and man the object whose very existence derives from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Then, the primary human relationship for Barth is that between man and woman, whereas for this branch of modern psychology at least the primary relationship is chronological – it is that between parent and infant. To flag up these differences (some of which Price is aware of) is not to deny Price's achievement. What it does do is to illustrate the fact that he does in the end let his optimism for the cause of dialogue colour his readings. Whether or not Barth offered, in his anthropology, the possibility of some rapprochement between theological and 'non-theological' anthropologies (and here we must note that, whilst he was undoubtedly moving, by the time he discussed the ethics of human sexuality and marriage (CD III/4), into more serious engagement with psychology, he did ultimately fail (or refuse) to draw out the implications of his Christology for the physical sciences), what Price has drawn out is the vast practical relevance of Barth's relational anthropology in place of the static substantial categories of so much classic theological anthropology.



with his doctrine of God: there we see, with its threefold repetition of the divine I, a doctrine oriented at the deepest level toward the revelation of God. Alan Torrance has shown extensively that this problematic status that relationship has in Barth's thinking stems from a lack of real relationship between the three 'modes' of God's being in his doctrine of God.

If the metaphor of repetition is to be used to establish the singularity of the divine identity in the threeness, this requires to be qualified by a much more profound doctrine of *perichoresis* than Barth seems willing to offer in this context.... Barth's concept of the trinitarian *Seinsweisen* obscures the concept of communion in God.<sup>90</sup>

With that being the case, when we come to anthropology we might ask: what room has Barth then allowed for encounter and communion as the likeness of humanity to the being of its Creator?

The critique is commonly carried over into assessments of his pneumatology, for there is now a general consensus to be found in the secondary and tertiary literature on Barth that the trait Torrance and others have identified in his doctrine of God is perpetuated by the overall weakness of his pneumatology.<sup>91</sup> In place of Irenaeus' model of God's dealings with his creation being through both his 'hands', Barth presents a decidedly single-handed alternative. The effect on his anthropology we need only rehearse briefly here. Knowing Barth's general reticence about the Spirit, his understanding that man's twofold existence as male and female is intended to be the image of God's threefold existence as Father, Son and Spirit seems to be an open door to criticism.<sup>92</sup> Is the binary I-Thou dynamic insufficiently relational, then? Eugene

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<sup>90</sup> Torrance, A. J., *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 115. Thus Torrance offers a critique that fairer than that offered by Jürgen Moltmann, whom he cites: 'to understand God's threefold nature as eternal repetition or as holy tautology does not yet mean thinking in trinitarian terms. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be a matter of establishing the same thing three times. To view the three Persons merely as a triple repetition of one and the same God would be somewhat empty and futile.' (Moltmann, J., *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1981), 141-2)

<sup>91</sup> This broad agreement has been illustrated by Robert Jenson in particular: 'Karl Barth is the initiator and the model... of this century's renewal of Trinitarian theology.... The near-unanimity is therefore remarkable, with which a recent meeting of the Karl Barth Society of North America agreed that long stretches of Barth's thinking seem rather binitarian than Trinitarian.' (Jenson, R. W., 'You Wonder Where the Spirit Went', in *Pro Ecclesia*, 2 (1993), 296-304) Cf. Colwell, J. E., *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford, 1989), 303ff.

<sup>92</sup> We have also seen, however, that the case is not as simple as it first appears. For all his reticence concerning the father-mother-child analogue denied by Augustine (*CD III/1*, 321f.; *De Trinitate*, XII, 5-

Rogers suggests so, and argues that the phenomenology fails to allow for corporate or ecclesial relationships, reducing co-humanity to co-individuality.

Despite the suggestive bridal imagery, which serves another purpose, God's relationship to Israel and the Church resists reduction to I-Thou (in the singular) but may resemble I-Ye (in the plural). Otherwise the God-given and Spirit-consummated particularity of the biblical and post-biblical saints gets washed out.<sup>93</sup>

What has worried Robert Jenson and others more, though, is the effect this has on human reality itself. Humanity, especially as the creature of the Trinity, is for Irenaeus confined neither to the abstract universal or ideal, nor to the entirely particular, but can be found in a particular (Jesus Christ) who shares his humanity with universal significance. For Barth, on the other hand, the focal specifying of the *humanum* by a single story and the want of the Spirit of life-giving multiplicity work against all his endeavours to leave time for the redeeming of the many.

That said, whatever might be alleged about the overall weakness of his pneumatology, we have not found it to be so problematic with regard to its role in securing man's being as a being in encounter. It is that the relationship Barth gives to man in the left hand of his pneumatology he is in danger of taking away in the right hand of his Christology.

But further, it is not just that thereby man's existence as a relational being is under threat; it is man's whole being that is put in peril. The whole man, it must be remembered, can be understood only in the light of the real man, Jesus Christ. Thus the ordering of man's soul and body can be seen as analogous to Jesus Christ's being as God and man. Yet if this be the case, given Barth's Christology, is anything like a Chalcedonian ordering of soul and body finally possible in man, the two existing 'in ineffaceable difference, inseparable unity, and indestructible order'?<sup>94</sup> It would seem more logical for the body to exist in constant danger, if not the reality, of being

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6), the primary I-Thou binary relationship informs and is celebrated by relationships external to it, thus imaging more effectively than an isolated dyad the God who, as Eugene Rogers himself (who is highly critical of Barth at just this point) put it, 'is like a wedding feast, the love of two celebrated by a third' (Rogers, E. F. Jr., *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 195).

<sup>93</sup> Rogers, 184. To be fair, we must note that 'encounter' for Barth includes 'where one is with many, or many with one, or many with many' (CD III/2, 244). Yet, again, it seems quite easy to see such affirmations as unnatural attachments to the main bulk of his anthropology.

<sup>94</sup> CD III/2, 325

consumed by its own soul, a logic that is only advanced with the lack of any detailed doctrine of space (any *where* to encounter).

The fact that man remains, for Barth, a genuinely whole being in encounter is a testimony to him and his theological instinct. It is not that his anthropology at this point has ceased to be truly Christological. It is that, to the benefit of man as the soul of a body in encounter, he has ceased to be driven by the more Alexandrian strains that inhere his conception of the real man.



## 6

## When is Man?

In this last chapter on Barth we turn again to the question of time and its relation to man. It is not as if the passing of time from the second to the twentieth century had solved any of its own riddle. In any case, time (which, we will see, Barth saw as a co-creation) is the form of the external basis of the covenant, and so intrinsically worth studying. As such, man's existence in time is simply another aspect, in fact an exact parallel to, and the presupposition of, the other anthropological fact that man is as he has spirit, i.e., as he is established, constituted and maintained by God as the soul of his body. As man is the soul of his body, so he exists in his time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *CD* III/2, 521ff.

### Jesus, Lord of Time

Back in the early days of dialectical theology, in the 1922 edition of *Der Römerbrief*, Barth had famously stated ‘if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the “infinite qualitative distinction” between time and eternity’.<sup>2</sup> Time and eternity, each being the negation of the other, Barth saw as the mode of existence of man and God respectively. This dialectic of time and eternity, denying the possibility of any union of the two, provided the fuel that would fire Barth’s critique of human religion since it rendered unattainable the goal of that enterprise. A decade on, whilst acknowledging the antiseptic significance such a timeless revelation had for its time, Barth himself put a warning over his old dialectic, that it had failed to do justice to the Word’s becoming (and remaining) flesh.<sup>3</sup> The first time-eternity model had to be modified once Christology was taken into account and Jesus Christ proclaimed as the one concrete mediator between time and eternity. For all the appearance of radical change from dialectic to analogy, however, there were elements of continuity, even elements that never seemed to change, leaving Barth’s later chronology with many of the problems that afflicted the original.<sup>4</sup>

In volume I of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth appeared in some ways to have almost entirely reversed the order he had first proposed. Rather than God being timeless and man being timeful, in the *Church Dogmatics* we see it is man in his fallen lack of encounter that always veers towards timelessness and non-historical, static existence. Man has been given time by God such that he might use it as the means by which he too, like God, could have his own history. Yet it is an inheritance man has

<sup>2</sup> Barth, K., *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., trans. Hoskyns, E. C. (London: Oxford, 1933), 10

<sup>3</sup> CD I/2, 50. It is hard to resist citing Robert Jenson on that old dialectic: ‘An “advanced” conception of God is very likely to be one of “pure substance,” visually pictured as an infinitely extended pudding (to steal someone’s devastating remark). If we also believe in the Christian message about God’s entry into history, we are almost certain to regard this entry as His emergence into a foreign and slightly distasteful realm and to regard His doing anything as an act of condescension.’ (Jenson, R. W., *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1963), 74)

<sup>4</sup> A detailed history of this development can be found in Roberts, R. H., *Eternity and Time in the Theology of Karl Barth: An Essay in Dogmatic and Philosophical Theology* (PhD: Edinburgh, 1975). For a more general treatment (and re-appraisal) of the overall movement in Barth’s thought from dialectic to analogy, see also Bruce McCormack’s definitive work *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-36* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Robert Jenson put it that ‘If one went through the *Commentary on Romans* and replaced the tangential intersection of time and eternity with the story narrated by the second article of the Apostles’ Creed, he would obtain the theology of the *Church Dogmatics*.’ (Jenson, R. W., *God after God: The God of the Future and the God of the Past seen in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Indianapolis & New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 71).

squandered by his avaricious use of it. So, for fallen, sinful man in himself the past is the when we leave and have no longer. The future is the when we do not yet have. As for our present, it is much like the flight of Bede's sparrow through the great hall, from darkness to darkness. Our time is condemned to disintegration and, at last, extinction, precisely because of our attempts to horde the present, so alienating the past and the future.

As for God, Barth can still say 'Time can have nothing to do with God.'<sup>5</sup> Yet the 'time' that can have nothing to do with God is now simply this fallen, disjointed time. Eternity is no longer a simple Augustinian negation of all temporality. George Hunsinger puts it superbly:

"God is light," Irenaeus once remarked, "and yet God is unlike any light that we know" (*Adversus haereses* 2.13.4). Barth knew this dictum and cited it (II/1, p. 190). It offers a possible paradigm for his use of the word "time." It is as though he were saying: "God is temporal, and yet God's temporality is unlike any time that we know." The time peculiar to God is at once the presupposition of creaturely time, and yet so utterly different as to be ineffable.<sup>6</sup>

Being the living God, God does not transcend or flee from time. He is the true possessor of it. As such, eternity cannot simply be known as the negative image of time, but must be freed from the Church's long Babylonian captivity of this abstract opposition.<sup>7</sup> Introducing the divine perfection of eternity (with its twin, glory), Barth set out his understanding of God's eternity in well-known words:

The being is eternal in whose duration beginning, succession and end are not three but one, not separate as a first, a second and a third occasion, but one simultaneous occasion as beginning, middle and end. Eternity is the simultaneity of beginning, middle and end, and to that extent it is pure duration (*reine Dauer*). Eternity is God in the sense in which in Himself and in all

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<sup>5</sup> CD II/1, 608

<sup>6</sup> Hunsinger, G., 'Mysterium Trinitatis: Karl Barth's Conception of Eternity' in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 189

<sup>7</sup> CD II/1, 611



things God is simultaneous, i.e., beginning, and middle as well as end, without separation, distance or contradiction.<sup>8</sup>

Where the creature's time is characterised by the fact that in it past, present and future are severed and put in opposition to each other, the 'purity' of God's duration is characterised by wholeness and integration: in eternity, beginning, succession and end neither fall apart nor into conflict with each other. Past, present and future exist in immediate unity. Man's time is contrastingly disjunctive and needs to be healed of its succession and division by being brought into the time of the triune life of durational simultaneity. This is neither timelessness nor sempiternity, but the duration of the simultaneity of past, present and future in contrast to their division within our time. Approvingly, he cites Boethius' definition of eternity (insofar as it defines God's eternity specifically, and not merely eternity in abstraction): *Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*.<sup>9</sup> In eternity, the past is not lost, and the future holds no threat of extinction, but the three (past, present, future) are harmoniously one just as Father, Son and Spirit are one. Yet God's time is not destabilised but established by its unity in trinity. The proper perichoresis of past, present and future involves a before and an after just as there is an order and succession within God. The Father begets, the Son is begotten, the Spirit proceeds from both. This does not mean that we can imagine that the three modes of time correspond to the three modes of God's being respectively. That would imply the very disjunction that God's being is free of. The Father, as origin and begetter, is not only beginning but also succession and end; the Son, as the begotten, is not only succession but also beginning and end, being of the same substance as the Father; the Spirit, as the one who proceeds from both, is not only end but also beginning and succession.<sup>10</sup>

Given that history for Barth is a matter of encounter, the triune God who is communion therefore is history, supreme and absolute time. He is a God who becomes. His being is event, the event of the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. It would only then be possible to talk of a purely timeless divine eternity if God were not the God of encounter that he is. To speak thus is necessarily to remove the gospel by denying the triune being of God as revealed in the moment of revealing

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<sup>8</sup> CD II/1, 608

<sup>9</sup> *De consol. Phil.* V, 6, cited in CD II/1, 610

<sup>10</sup> CD II/1, 615

and reconciling encounter in Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> Once this has been acknowledged, Barth feels that all abstract definitions of eternity can be jettisoned.

In the last resort when we think of eternity we do not have to think in terms of either the point or the line, the surface or space. We have simply to think of God Himself, recognising and adoring and loving the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is only in this way that we know eternity. For eternity is His essence.<sup>12</sup>

The triune God is eternity, the font of all time.<sup>13</sup> This, in chronological terms, is what must be meant by God's being for his creation. Here Barth ventures into something of a temporal equivalent to the Irenaean doctrine of God's being as χωρὼν καὶ ἀχώρητος, ascribing to God pre-temporality, supra-temporality and post-temporality, in that he precedes the beginning of time, accompanies its duration and exists after its end.<sup>14</sup> The God who has and is real time thus encloses all time within himself, and can take time for and give time to the creature as he has history, or encounter and communion, with

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<sup>11</sup> CD II/1, 618

<sup>12</sup> CD II/1, 639

<sup>13</sup> CD II/1, 611. Margaret Barker believes that a very similar conception of eternity can be found within the liturgical symbolism of Old Testament Israel's worship: 'It can be shown, for example, that the temple concept of time was neither linear nor cyclic, but based upon the concept of a hidden eternity in the midst of time as we perceive it. This hidden centre was also the unity from which all creation came forth.' (Barker, M., *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003), 146)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 221. In a fascinating historical excursus, Barth draws out some of the implications of the perichoretic nature of God's pre-temporality, supra-temporality and post-temporality. If each is co-dependent, it is impossible to stress one above the others, just as it is entirely inappropriate to posit the three persons of the trinity as rivals (who are the basis of the three forms of temporality), without serious theological consequences. Yet this is precisely what has happened to unbalance theology, as he seeks to demonstrate in a summary historical theology of time from Reformational through to twentieth century theology. The Reformers, he suggests, weighted God's pre-temporality too heavily in their emphasis upon God's election in particular. Human life and God's presence in time was therefore consigned to an appendix, whilst God's post-temporality and therefore eschatology became 'the appendix of an appendix'. Under such theology, eschatology became just the accomplishment of the important matter, which is God's predetermination of it before time. This may account for many of the pastoral problems of assurance that the puritans were later forced to deal with. Then, and more dangerously, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the evolution of a new form of one-sidedness, giving preference to God's supra-temporality and so man in his time (an imbalance most starkly represented by Feuerbach). By the beginning of the twentieth century (a date perhaps marked by the publication of Johannes Weiss' *Die Predigt von Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*) the scene had again shifted to become an over-emphasis upon God's post-temporality and eschatology. (CD II/1, 631-8). One is given to wonder, if this is the case, whether Barth does in fact see a closer correlation than he is prepared to admit between beginning, succession and end on the one hand, and Father, Son and Spirit on the other. Might not this historical theology just as aptly describe the Reformational and post-Reformational concern for the Father's election, moving on to the original quest for the historical Jesus and culminating in the twentieth century's special interest in pneumatology?

him in Jesus Christ. Eberhard Jüngel notes this as an aspect of God's election of himself, whereby God's being corresponds to itself as Father, Son and Spirit:

in the history which is constituted through this correspondence God makes *space* within himself for *time*. This making-space-for-time within God is a continuing event. The space of time conceived as a continuing event we call eternity. "God has time because and as He has eternity." (CD II/1, 611)<sup>15</sup>

Chronos, the great αἰών and God of time, is dethroned and laid subject before the feet, not of his son Zeus, but of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup>

It is to Jesus Christ as the Lord of time that Barth turns in his next protracted examination of the question of time. In the opening pages of his part-volume on the doctrine of election (CD II/2), Barth had referred to the life of Christ as *Urgeschichte*, the primary history of the covenant relationship between God and man, which serves as the basis of all other history between God and man.<sup>17</sup> In *The Epistle to the Romans*, he had spoken of seeing 'the light of the LOGOS of all history and of all life; and this is the non-historical, or rather the Primal History, which conditions all history.'<sup>18</sup> After some deliberation over the issue in volume I/2, he returned in CD II/2 to the notion of 'primal history', specifying it now as that history which exists between God and the man Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>19</sup> It is this term that serves as a vital conceptual anchor within his examination of time as an aspect of the doctrine of creation.

In CD III/2 Barth begins to propound his own doctrine of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. Here we see that Barth does not imagine God's precession, accompanying and succession of creaturely time abstractly but concretely in Jesus Christ. The history of

<sup>15</sup> Jüngel, E., *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., trans. Webster, J. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 111. Similarly, Robert Jenson elaborates on this theme of time as a divine *distentio* in his *Systematic Theology* to provide what could appear to be something approximating a temporal complement to Jürgen Moltmann's use of the Lurian doctrine of *Tsimtsum*: 'for God to create is for him to *make accommodation* in his triune life for other persons and things than the three whose mutual life he is. In himself, he *opens room*, and that act is the event of creation. We call this accommodation in the triune life "time." (Jenson, R. W., *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25, italics original, cf. ch. 17; Moltmann, J., *God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation* trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 1985), ch. 4, § 3; Scholem, G. G., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 244-286). However, Barth's position should not in any way be read as a panentheism dressed up in temporal garb. His conception of Jesus as Lord of time is utterly inimical to the sort of divine dependence and limitation associated with panentheistic models, which he deplored as worse than undiluted pantheism. (CD II/1, 312, 562).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. CD III/2, 456

<sup>17</sup> CD II/2, 8f.

<sup>18</sup> *The Epistle to the Romans*, 140

<sup>19</sup> CD I/2, 57f.; II/2, 8; cf. Jüngel, 90, n. 57



Jesus is the event of the Word of God in atonement and revelation, the coming of God to man and man to God, and as such it underlies and precedes all other reality as the Word of God which brings all other reality (that is, creaturely reality) into being. God's primal decision for Jesus is the primal relationship between God and his creature whereby he is with and for his creature specifically, and his whole creation more generally, even before it is. This prevenient positive relation of himself to what is created is 'primal history' and is found in his decision to be for the man Jesus. Just as the speaking of the Word has an ontological function in establishing the being of the creature, so too it has a further ontological function in establishing the being of the co-creation, time. Just as there is no man, so there is no time preceding Jesus Christ. When Barth turns in a subsection entitled 'Beginning Time' to the problem of our origin, it is this that is his answer. There, Barth does not consider debates over the mechanics of human origins, such as that between creationism and traducianism, worth entering into, given that they fail to deal with the problem of beginning from non-being, a problem that must be dealt with if we are to avoid a pantheistic emanationist account of creation. Instead, his goal is to seek to affirm that we do not come from the abyss, but from 'the being, speaking and acting of the eternal God who has preceded us.'<sup>20</sup>

Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God, lived a time of his own from his birth to his death. Yet, in contrast to us, he did not live the life of the *homo incurvatus in se*, but a life lived for others. In his obedience, the Son neither made the idolatrous attempt to control time that so characterises the life of sinful humanity, nor an attempt to escape it, but instead trusted the covenant God by living within the temporal form of his creation. Here, if anywhere, is the place to find genuine history, even *Urgeschichte*, for here God comes to man and man comes to God. The Creator became a creature who then lived for God and so for all men. As the Christ, the one who lives for his people, his history was never exclusively private, but inclusive and public. Just as he shared his humanity with us, establishing our human being, so he shared his time with us, establishing our temporal form. So he shared his time, becoming the contemporary of all men, and his time was never his alone.<sup>21</sup> In Jesus, then, the light of God's time shines into the darkness of man's fallen time. It is one point of light within that darkness, but a point whose light permeates the entire shadow. T. S. Eliot is unmatched in his expression of much the same thought when he wrote 'The Rock':

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<sup>20</sup> CD III/2, 577

<sup>21</sup> CD III/2, 439-40; cf. I/2, 51 ff.

Then came at a predetermined moment,  
 a moment in time and of time,  
 A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history:  
 transecting, bisecting the world of time,  
 a moment in time, but not like a moment of time,  
 A moment in time but time was made through that moment:  
 for without the meaning there is no time,  
 and that moment in time gave the meaning.<sup>22</sup>

Christ became one with, and so the head of, his creation, recapitulating all things in himself (Ephesians 1:10), meaning that the καιροί (the 'sub-times', as it were) are not annulled but fulfilled. His time is the 'acceptable year of the Lord', the great Sabbath, the fulfilled time of God's covenant. Barth understandably pressgangs Galatians 4:4 (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον) into his service to explain that the mission of the Son does not so much come at as bring with it the fullness of time (an interpretation that, Barth concedes, is not what the verse at first sight seems to be saying).<sup>23</sup> The Son entered the temporality that all humanity experiences, bringing with him the fulfilled time that is before and after all other time, making χρόνος as such. All time exists because of and for this time.

As a part of the overflowing grace of God, this selfless time of Jesus burst the bounds of finitude appointed for the human race as Jesus was raised to a further history, that of the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension.<sup>24</sup> In this second time the preceding time of the man Jesus is revealed and the apostles (and, through them, the Church) understand Jesus to be who he is. For in this Easter time Jesus, whilst remaining *vere homo*, was manifested to the apostles in the mode of God, where before his deity had been veiled.<sup>25</sup> Thus the Church could come to understand that his time is not only the time of a man, but the time of God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever, for whilst all other men have a beginning, a limited duration, and an end, Jesus was before he was, still is, and still will be.<sup>26</sup> He is the Lord of time. His

<sup>22</sup> Eliot, T. S., 'The Rock', in *T. S. Eliot: Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), 119

<sup>23</sup> *CD III/2*, 459ff.

<sup>24</sup> *CD III/2*, 440-1

<sup>25</sup> *CD III/2*, 448f.

<sup>26</sup> *CD III/2*, 463-4

yesterday is also today, meaning that the New Testament community can rightly understand Jesus to be really if transcendentally present. Barth understands the appearance of the exalted Jesus to Saul (the apostle 'born out of due time' according to 1 Corinthians 15:8) on the road to Damascus as an example of this: whilst taking place after the ascension, the appearance belongs properly to the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension.<sup>27</sup>

At last in the New Testament Jesus can be identified with the God of Israel, who is the first and the last, as he announces himself at the end of the apocalypse to be τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (Revelation 22:13).<sup>28</sup> As the beginning and the end, he has a being in time, embracing and enclosing within himself past, present and future. Yet, Barth goes on, the implicit ἐγώ εἰμι prescinds the notion of any simple succession of past, present and future. It means the simultaneity of all three in him.<sup>29</sup> It is because he is this Lord of time, the first and the last, that Barth feels he can understand Jesus to be the contemporary of the patriarchs (in such a way that Luther could be affirmed in his description of Adam as a Christian), the one who in the Old Testament already called himself the one who is and who will be.<sup>30</sup>

In his mercy, God has revealed himself to man. To say this is to say that God has time for us; eternity becoming time, we might say, such that time might become eternity.<sup>31</sup> This he did for man in his fallen time through Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of his covenant. The time of Jesus Christ is the time of the fulfilment of the covenant, the fullness of time. As such, all time is his time. Even the time of the creation was thus the time of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos. Eternity, on this model, is no longer the pre-defined, mythological or abstract notion of religious Christianity. The old dialectic of time and eternity is no longer required or valid, for the life of Jesus Christ not only reaches into eternity, it is both eternity and the overlap of time and eternity. Jesus Christ is the revelation and reality of God's eternal essence. He, and not the sinful man who derives his existence from him, is the Lord of time.

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<sup>27</sup> CD III/2, 470-1

<sup>28</sup> Barth would not wish it to be imagined that, because Jesus Christ is the ἀρχή of creation, the creation did not have a historical entry into reality. This vital theological reality he deemed some of the fathers (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycus*, 11, 10; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6, 7; Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*, 1, 4, 15; Augustine, *Confessions*, 11, 8f., 24) to have obscured when they chose to translate בְּרֵאשִׁית, Gen 1:1, with ἐν Λόγῳ (CD III/1, 14).

<sup>29</sup> CD III/2, 476

<sup>30</sup> In a subsection on the Old Testament as revelation of Jesus Christ, it is to Irenaeus that Barth first turns as one of the chief proponents of the theme (CD I/2, 72ff.).

<sup>31</sup> CD I/2, 45; II/1, 616; III/2, 512-9



This is a very different rebuke to that articulated by dialectical theology, yet rebuke it still is. Where in the West time has been absolutised by Newton and substantiated by the clock, it has unavoidably been forged into a property and commodity for man, to be arranged and ordered for his convenience. Man has become the God-like lord of time himself. One might say for an age even less certain than Barth's that time, and in particular the extended present, is increasingly being hollowed out into a solipsistic, ambient music filled, bolt-hole from the crush of a culture short on the product. Yet it was something remarkably similar to this that was in his theological sights when he proposed Jesus instead of us as Lord of time:

Everything depends on whether time has a different centre from the constantly disappearing and never coming "now" of the pagan concept of time. But time really has this centre, and being related to eternity in this centre, it is accompanied and surrounded and secured by eternity.<sup>32</sup>

It is, perhaps, too much of a cliché to say that one's doctrine of God will determine one's doctrine of time. Yet a conscious derivation of the one from the other cannot be said to be so routine (and the extent to which that further shapes and informs the experience of life has to be an even less well trodden thought path).<sup>33</sup> The case is only magnified when it comes to the relationship between Christology and theories of time. The one necessarily informs the other: for example, a Nestorian Christology is by its very nature commensurate with a dialectical relationship between time and eternity, whilst at the other extreme a monophysite Christology must tend towards a theology of sempiternity. However, theories of time, even theological theories of time, can hardly be said to be littered with Christological references. Oscar Cullmann is (ironically, given Barth's opposition to his chronology) a notable exception, feeling that time was the last space within Barth's thought to be illumined by Christology.

When I here demonstrate that his conception of time, in which I see the last but quite momentous remnant of the influence of philosophy upon his exposition of the Bible, is incompatible with that of Primitive Christianity, I believe that

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<sup>32</sup> CD II/1, 629

<sup>33</sup> Thus Robert Jenson commends Augustine for his logic, if critiquing the final product because of the materials used: 'Augustine rightly drew his interpretation of time from his doctrine of God. Unhappily, his recurrent conceptual Unitarianism manifests itself with special force just here: God is understood as sheer simultaneous Presence.' (Jenson, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2, 29)

thereby I am carrying out his Christocentric program on the field of New Testament exposition and by means of exegetical methods.<sup>34</sup>

Barth felt he could respond to the criticism in kind. Cullmann's linear time model, he suggested, was just such a reprehensible philosophical construct, in that it merely inserted Christ into an already existing time-construct, rather than allowing Jesus Christ as the revelation of the βασιλεύς τῶν αἰώνων (1 Tim. 1:17) in his time to determine the Christian doctrine of time.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, because of its existence before creation, Barth suspected that Cullmann's linear time savoured too much of autonomous divinity for comfort.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Barth believed that he had successfully purged the doctrine of time from abstractions whereby time is not understood as God's (co-)creation. The concept of time in the *Church Dogmatics*, however, is in practice far more polluted than he was prepared to admit: the Platonic and Augustinian bones still clearly show through an account that Richard Roberts has shown to be deeply idealist in the flesh. Leaving the impact of the Hegelian concept of synthesis on the system for the moment, it can be seen that the result is a swing too far from Chronos: in the process of being de-divinised, time seems effectively to have been hypostatized (despite his claim that 'time is not a something, a creature with other creatures, but a form of all the reality distinct from God'<sup>37</sup>), assuming the category of substantial creation.

Yet, with the completion of part-volume III/2 of the *Church Dogmatics*, the very opposite problem to the usual methodological one seems to obtain: the person of Christ so dominates as to obscure all other reality. From the very earliest days, Barth had never been tempted by more Aristotelian conceptions of time as a metric of external movement. Yet neither did the Augustinian alternative of time as an internal experience come to collapse in his thinking into pure subjectivism, nor become just another form for the mind's organisation of sense-data. Instead of a *distentio animi* he effectively posited something of a *distentio Christi*. God's time is when the Father relates to the Son through the Spirit, a time that the Son shares with all that are his. Jesus Christ being the Lord of time, his story is the meta-narrative into which all the sub-plots of human interaction fit. All other events are the acting out of the meeting of

<sup>34</sup> Cullmann, O., *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (London: SCM, 1951), 13

<sup>35</sup> CD III/2, 443

<sup>36</sup> *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, ed. Godsey, J. D., Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 10 (London & Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), 55

<sup>37</sup> CD III/2, 438

God and man, eternity and time, that occurred in the event of the incarnation. For Barth, the *unio hypostatica* constitutes the primal synthesis, first of all for divinity and humanity, and consequently for eternity and time. Time, then, if we might speak this way, has something akin to, if not actually, an enhypostatic relation to eternity.<sup>38</sup> The novel question for such a novel chronology is whether all other history, having been so relegated, is not made superfluous. Whilst commenting on the epistemology of time, he reveals that this might in fact be the case: ‘we do not know,’ he writes, ‘what time means for animals or plants, or for the rest of the universe.’<sup>39</sup> Yet is this merely a matter of epistemology? Could it not equally be said that the figure of Jesus in time appears so disproportionately brobdingnagian that all other temporality becomes at best vestigial? It is not so much that we cannot know what time means for animals and plants. It is simply that there is none to speak of.

Thus it is that the antitheses within Barth’s Christology, where Antioch and Alexandria remain at loggerheads, are carried into his chronology. Colin Gunton approaches this inner contradiction through Barth’s concept of ‘durational simultaneity’, asking ‘what, conceivably, is simultaneity that is pure duration? Duration and simultaneity appear to be (at least) contraries. If a contradiction is being generated, the most likely explanation is that Barth is halting between two opinions.’<sup>40</sup> These two opinions we have suggested are, at root, Christological. So, on the one hand, the Word’s distinction from his own flesh has effected a synthetic dualism of time and eternity. Richard Roberts notes precisely this in Barth’s chronology:

Barth’s equivocation regarding ‘time’ (that underlies the systematic and pervasive ambiguity of this concept in the *Church Dogmatics*) relies upon a conceptual distinction, the separation of a ‘simultaneous’ from a ‘successive’ time order in a contrast of ‘duration’ and ‘division’. Is such a distinction not in fact a mere conceptual sleight of hand, in which two logically interdependent

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<sup>38</sup> On the pre-existent being of the man Jesus as the temporal object of God’s eternal election, Jüngel writes: ‘If I have understood correctly this decisive locus of Barth’s doctrine of election, then the being of the man Jesus with God is to be understood in the sense of the doctrine of the *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis* of the human nature of Jesus Christ. Barth himself does not explicitly employ this doctrine in connection with the doctrine of election. But if the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God is not to be understood in the sense of a projection of a temporal existence into eternity, then we must speak of this temporal existence of Jesus in the sense of the *anhypostasis*. Jesus’ existence would not be what it is if it were not *already* in the ‘eternal decision of God by which time is founded and governed’ (CD II/2, 99). But it is precisely in the eternal decision of God in the sense of the *enhypostasis* that this existence really is *temporal* existence.’ (Jüngel, 96)

<sup>39</sup> CD III/2, 521

<sup>40</sup> Gunton, C. E., *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: OUP, 1978), 179-80



aspects of the idea of time, as used by Barth, are distinguished and subsequently hypostatized into deceptively distinct categories of reality?<sup>41</sup>

Yet again, the very antithesis within his Christology can also be discerned. In another essay, Roberts voices his concern that there is here an acute danger of a temporal docetism parallel to a docetic view of Christ's humanity as conceived in Chalcedonian Christology.<sup>42</sup> The reality of the incarnation, lies, he suggests, within its own temporal envelope, detached from all other 'extra-theological' time or humanity. This is something Barth explicitly disavows, and, especially given his wariness, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is not that time here is presented as a merely illusory phenomenon, but that it is swallowed up in eternity.<sup>43</sup> Just as Jesus melts into God, disappearing as a human, so time is sensibly swallowed up in eternity.<sup>44</sup> This is the chronological impact of the Eutychian aspects of his doctrines of the λόγος ἑνωστικός and the humanity of God. In his 'redemption' of time, it is not that God has taken time for man, but taken time from man by taking time to himself in such a sense that it is swallowed up and drowned in his eternity.

Having said that, the tensions within Barth's Christology should alert us to the danger of seeing this problem as universally operative within the Barth corpus. For Barth refused to allow what he saw as titanism to operate within Christian redemption. There is to be no θεοποίησις of the being of humanity (which he understood as the sort of transmogrification soteriology referred to in the second chapter). That this is the case is not always immediately obvious. After all, God's election of grace, the sum and essence of the gospel, is properly treated as a part of the doctrine of God, since 'originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of Himself'.<sup>45</sup> Man's salvation is his being taken into the self-determination of God to be Father, Son and Spirit. So, in election, man is caught up into the event of God's being. 'Salvation,' he can write, 'fulfilment, perfect being means – and this is what created being does not have in itself – being which has a part in the being of God, from which and to which it is...'. Yet, Barth immediately goes on to add, '...not a divinised being but a being which is hidden in God, and in that sense (distinct from God and secondary)

<sup>41</sup> Roberts, R. H., 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time: Its Nature and Implications' in *A Theology on its Way? Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 47-8

<sup>42</sup> 'The Ideal and the Real in the Theology of Karl Barth' in Roberts, 76

<sup>43</sup> CD III/2, 463

<sup>44</sup> CD III/2, 65; cf. 207; IV/4, 163

<sup>45</sup> CD II/2, 3

eternal being.<sup>46</sup> This was no mere caveat. All semblances of θεοποίησις he energetically opposed as antithetical to God's being God, and God's being gracious.<sup>47</sup> The divinisation of nature was, he felt, just one aspect of the sickness unto death that infected nineteenth and early twentieth century theology and culture. It was a Feuerbachian confusion of God with nature or reason, rooted in that 'invention of Antichrist', the *analogia entis*.<sup>48</sup> Witness the fervour with which he pursues the traditional Reformed critique of the Lutheran teaching about the participation of the human nature of Christ in the omnipresence of the Logos (a new face to which critique he has provided with his doctrine of the λόγος ἑνσαρκος):

when it speaks of a divinisation of human essence in Jesus Christ, and when this divinisation of the flesh of Jesus Christ is understood as the supreme and final and proper meaning and purpose of the incarnation – even to the point of worshipping it – a highly equivocal situation is created.

Worse, such a conception proffers a deduction that 'can compromise at a single stroke nothing less than the whole of christology'.<sup>49</sup> How so? Because, he argues, the humanity of Jesus Christ is the humanity of all men, and thus it leads to a 'high-pitched' anthropology in which humanity as a whole is either already deified, or at least on the verge of deification. Thus it was natural, he suggests, that the flower of Idealism should have grown in Lutheran soil, with its own 'high-pitched' anthropology. He can even suggest that Feuerbach was justified in appealing to Luther for his theory of the identity of divine and human essence.

If the supreme achievement of Christology, its final word, is the apotheosised flesh of Jesus Christ, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, deserving of our worship, is it not merely a hard shell which conceals the sweet kernel of

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<sup>46</sup> CD IV/1, 8. 'The taking up of humanity into the event of the knowledge of God is grounded in the taking up of humanity into the event of the being of God. That sounds strange, and in no way does Barth think of it in the sense of a θεοποίησις [deification] of the being of humanity. The taking up of humanity into the event of God's being is, rather, humanity's salvation.' (Jüngel, 75)

<sup>47</sup> With regard to a *locus classicus* for deification soteriologies, Peter's statement that γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς (2 Peter 1:4), he comments that Peter was simply speaking of 'the practical fellowship of Christians with God and on this basis the conformity of their acts with the divine nature.' (*The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 28)

<sup>48</sup> CD I/1, xiii

<sup>49</sup> CD IV/2, 81

the divinity of humanity as a whole and as such, a shell which we can confidently discard and throw away once it has performed this service?<sup>50</sup>

All annihilation of our humanity – even by elevation into or fusion with deity – Barth has studiously sought to oppose. We might allow that he would have the same zeal in his chronology, a zeal that might even drive him to hypostatise and substantiate time. This, as well as the more extreme Alexandrian tendencies at work in his Christology, must be taken into account if we are rightly to esteem the chronology his Christology shaped.

It is here that we must go on to point for one last time to Barth's lack of prolonged consideration of space in *CD* III/2 alongside his consideration of time. It would seem (worryingly for his doctrine of the λόγος ἑνσαρκος) that this is simply what operating within the parameters of the field of space and time as left by Kant, who described time as the formal *a priori* condition of all appearances or universal categories, looks like.<sup>51</sup> If so, it may well be that, for Barth, the doctrine of time actually serves double duty, covering the ground for both itself and a doctrine of space (ironically, given that at the same time Einstein was rendering such Kantian categorisation obsolete). This would explain his writing of 'understanding time in all its three forms as the time created by God, as the divinely given space for human life.'<sup>52</sup> Eberhard Jüngel elaborates, suggesting that Barth's chronology does in fact give room for a real topology:

In that God *makes space* for time in his eternal history, one could also speak of God's *corporeality*. It would consist in the fact that God has *space* in his being. Even this, of course, is meaningful only as a statement of revelation. And so Barth talks immediately in concrete, christological terms, with reference to John 1.1, of the Logos as a 'stop-gap' for Jesus. Thus from eternity God's being has *space* for human history. In *making space within himself* for time, he also makes a place for us alongside himself. Talk of God's corporeality in this sense becomes eschatologically relevant in so far as Barth understands the eschatological being of humanity as "a being which is hidden in God" without its difference from the eternal being of God being thereby

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<sup>50</sup> *CD* IV/2, 81

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Politis, V., (London: Everyman, 1934), Transcendental Aesthetic

<sup>52</sup> *CD* III/2, 554



abolished (cf. *CD* IV/1, p. 8). One could define matters thus: God's corporeality is the eternal space of time which makes space for participation in God's being, a space of time for which God himself makes room in himself (cf. John 14.2). God's corporeality would thus be the end of all the ways of God, but God's corporeality as the space of the spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν) promised to us, full of life and love.<sup>53</sup>

For all the brilliance of the suggestion, has the problem really been dealt with, though? Can this 'space' for time within God occupy any other dimension than that of time itself? If not, then the problematic effect is ultimately that there then is no space either within or beyond time, no *world* without end. His anthropology had already come dangerously close to effectively subsuming creation, seeing non-human reality, heaven and earth, as unimportant in themselves. Hope, then, for Barth, would necessarily be reduced to pure personal existence devoid of any new world beyond death.<sup>54</sup>

In fairness to Barth, though, despite his omission in *CD* III/2, it is possible to ascertain something of his conception of space through his doctrine of God, and in particular §31 on the perfections of the divine freedom.<sup>55</sup> It is in that volume that, having examined God's omnipresence, Barth ventures to write explicitly of space alongside time:

Within the sphere of this creation there is, then, no time which is not enclosed by the eternity of this Word, no space which does not have its origin in its omnipresence and which is not for this reason conditioned by it. There is, in fact, no possibility of escaping or avoiding this Word.<sup>56</sup>

Space, like time, then, is not independent of God and absolute in itself. Just as there is no time separable from him, so there is no space, no 'where' outside of God. Time and space pre-exist together in God in his eternity and omnipresence respectively. Both are shared with the creature in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's faithful covenant-

<sup>53</sup> Jüngel, 113, n. 148

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Moltmann, J., *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. Leitch, J W. (London: SCM, 1967), 45ff. Elsewhere Moltmann warns, 'The modern reduction of the expectation of salvation to the religious and moral personality is a deadly declaration of doom for the rest of the world. The patristic church's doctrine of physical redemption was more comprehensive in its cosmic dimensions.' (Moltmann, J., *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1996), 92)

<sup>55</sup> See above, p. 169, n. 70

<sup>56</sup> *CD* II/2, 95

partner: he stands behind us at the beginning of all things. He is Lord: he sits exalted far above us. He is the suffering servant: he has come down to us, but then descended unsurpassedly far below us into judgment. He is our hope and forerunner: he is before us. Behind us, before us, above us and below us, he encompasses all space as God's primal τόπος, the criterion of place. If time, then, is God's gift to man that he might have history, the time *when* he may be found, space, we might infer, is God's gift to man as *where* he may be found. Would that Barth had articulated such in his anthropology and so fortified his exposition of the whole man.

To finish this section, there is one appropriate and very obvious casualty: eschatology. Colin Gunton has observed that at much the same time as eschatology was being heralded as Christianity's death-warrant (in that Jesus was being understood to be a mistaken prophet of a coming eschaton), Barth had the genius to champion it as a life warrant.<sup>57</sup> Certainly he was a bold champion: 'If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology, there remains no relationship whatever with Christ.'<sup>58</sup> Yet for all that, many have seen in *Der Römerbrief* more Kantian dualism than distinctively Christian eschatology, whatever that might look like. There we see, not a teleology and movement towards a real end, a salvation 'nearer now than when we first believed' (Romans 13:11), but an existential crisis for man as he exists at the brink of God's eternity, a 'vertical' as opposed to a 'horizontal' eschatology.<sup>59</sup> In volume II of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth confessed his exegesis of Romans had been mistaken, and we have seen something of the new eschatology in volume III.<sup>60</sup> A timeless eschatology has been superseded by a realised eschatology of revelation. That is, instead of the pure creaturely speculation of a sempiternal existence for man (an infinitely elongated time simply being the idealisation of creaturely existence), time is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In our corrupted nature we have a being which is one long loss of time. For that to be extended would be the very opposite of healing; it would be the prolongation of man's temporal sentence and curse. Thus Jesus Christ came to reconcile all people in himself. In doing so God's covenant was fulfilled and so the end came in him. In

<sup>57</sup> Gunton, C. E., "'Until He Comes": Towards an Eschatology of Church Membership' in *Called to One Hope: Perspectives on Life to Come*, ed. J. E. Colwell (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 252-266

<sup>58</sup> *The Epistle to the Romans*, 314

<sup>59</sup> Something very close to Barth's eternal eschatology in Romans was also being propagated by Paul Althaus at the same time, who wrote of his 'axiological eschatology': 'We arrive at the completion not by traversing the longitudinal lines of history to their end, but by erecting everywhere in history the perpendiculars. That is to say, just as every time is equally close to the primordial state and the Fall, so too is every time equally immediate to the completion. In this sense every time is the last time.' (*Die Letzten Dinge. Entwurf einer christlichen Eschatologie*, (Gütersloh: 1922), 84, in Moltmann, J., *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 2003), 99)

<sup>60</sup> CD III/1, 635

his death, the time of fallen man is concluded, and in his resurrection dawns God's time as the time of reconciled man. So it can be seen that, not only has Jesus Christ taken our past, not only is he our contemporary, he is our future. He is not only the ἀρχή, but also the τέλος. In him we have our true being in time and a hope that is not abstractly temporal, but personal.

What sort of a future would that be, which could be our future *instead* of Him or *alongside* of Him? Our sole future is that *He* will come, just as our sole present is that He has come. By virtue of His kingly office, as that become visible in His resurrection, the Church is in the position of having no other future than that which it acknowledges in the prayer: Amen; come, Lord Jesus! By virtue of His kingly office it *has* this future. *Venturus est* therefore means: Christ is our *hope*, and – *Christ* is our hope.<sup>61</sup>

This being the case, the resurrection ushered in the last day in such a way that the believer in Jesus can live a life hidden in God: 'Nothing which will be has not already taken place on Easter Day'.<sup>62</sup> The time of Jesus Christ overarches and accompanies ours such that recollection of that time must also be expectation of it. Whilst for us the resurrection and the parousia are two separate events, for him they are one single event, the parousia being when the arch of his time over ours will be completed and our allotted time will be at an end. The only new thing the parousia could bring is the unveiling of Christ's present lordship over what is already a new creation in him. Then it will be announced χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται (Revelation 10:6), and the disintegrated time that is the fallout of our own greed and alienation will be judged and swallowed up in God's congruous triune time as he presents us with our future in Jesus Christ. The resurrection is the anticipation, the parousia the fulfilment of the same event of the eschaton, 'ending time'.<sup>63</sup>

Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann and Robert Jenson have all discerned that the cumulative effect is just the same reduction and disarmament of eschatology as

<sup>61</sup> *Credo: A Presentation of the Chief Problems of Dogmatics with Reference to the Apostles' Creed*, trans. James Strathearn McNab (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 120 (italics and bold original); cf. CD I/1, 464

<sup>62</sup> CD III/2, 489

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that, in his exposition of the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth elaborated this point by describing the resurrection, the real presence of Jesus Christ with us by the Spirit, and his final return as three forms of the one event, which is his parousia. This he argued by referring to the original meaning of παρουσία, which is 'effective presence', and its association with the word ἐπιφάνεια (CD IV/3, 292).



could be described in Barth's early work.<sup>64</sup> Again, maybe there is a closer correlation in his system between God's post-temporality and the Spirit than he has been prepared to acknowledge, the weakness of his pneumatology simply playing out in the temporal field. So Robert Jenson:

In general, Barth's discussions of the Spirit are not so convincing as his discussions of the Father and the Son. It is hard to see what is said that has not been said before. In contrast to Barth's usual fullness and determination to be understood at all costs, we find here brief concatenations of hints and dicta. One is even tempted to think that the incompleteness of the *Church Dogmatics*, with the eschatology and doctrine of the Spirit missing, is not merely a matter of chronology.<sup>65</sup>

Yet it is the more specifically Christological problems we have been noting: here we might add that if there is really no future 'alongside' Jesus Christ, then is there room for the Bride, the Church, there? Barth answers that the possibility for the existence of the community of Christ is created by the resurrection. That is, Jesus Christ lives, and he lives as the one who has come and the one who is still to come. The space for man's existence, when he can come to a knowledge of what has happened for him in Jesus Christ, is found there, in the interval between the first and final parousia.<sup>66</sup> It does not appear to be a convincing affirmation of the real existence of man, the Church, and his time, however. For the two events are explicitly said to be one for Jesus Christ. Instead of being liberated for existence in that interval, his Bride seems to be crushed for lack of space.

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<sup>64</sup> Pannenberg, W., *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Clayton, P., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990); *Systematic Theology* trans. Bromiley, G. W. (Grand Rapids, MI.; Eerdmans & Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), Vol. 3; Moltmann, J., *The Spirit of Life*, trans. Kohl, M. (London: SCM, 1992); Jenson, *God After God*; *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Whether or not they themselves are any more successful in maintaining the right relation of time and eternity, past, present and future is another matter, and one that cannot concern us here.

<sup>65</sup> Jenson, *God After God*, 173f. The criticism may not hold with regard to Barth's doctrine of the knowledge of God, but it does seem to when pointing to the specifically eschatological function of the Spirit (cf. Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, ch. VII, § v).

<sup>66</sup> CD IV/1, 333

### The Covenant as the Presupposition of Reconciliation

Having briefly considered the eschatological fallout of this chronology, we are naturally led on to the more immediately pertinent question of the story of man, and his identity in relation to creation and redemption. If we might employ the musical metaphor Barth himself turns to here, there is a true harmony (involving both agreement and difference) between this chronology and the 'perfection of an imperfect creation' motif in Irenaeus' thought.

For it should not be supposed that his weakened eschatology necessarily implied a lack of hope or optimism. On the contrary, whilst it may take a different form to the eighteenth century (and particularly Leibnizian) optimism he amusingly appraises at the end of *CD III/1*, von Balthasar is just one among many commentators to note that, as he puts it, Barth's schema 'veritably thrums with a hymnic certainty of eventual victory'.<sup>67</sup> It is not that Barth was sublimely detached from the gloomy realities of post-war Europe as he wrote volume III in a way that he had not been in 1918. It is that even in 1918 he had been thinking theologically, and his theology now gave him the light of hope even (or perhaps especially) in the darkness of his social and political landscape: '[i]t is easy to be afraid anywhere in the world today. The whole of the Western world, the whole of Europe is afraid, afraid of the East. But we must not be afraid.... Everything is in the hands of God.'<sup>68</sup>

This optimism is woven into the very fabric of the creation, seen in the first creation account's indication of a twofold aspect of creaturely existence, that there is both light and shadow, day and night, land and water, a positive and a negative.<sup>69</sup> And, significantly, there it can be seen that, in contrast to our gloomy phraseology and chronology where night follows day and where time is measured in units both starting and ending in darkness, with light as a mere episode, first there is evening and then there is morning. As God spoke light into the primal darkness, so day follows night. Light following darkness is the foundation of biblical chronology. This optimism, confident in the triumph of the Creator and Redeemer's gracious Yes, even has an explicitly anthropological dimension, reminiscent of Irenaeus' description of Jesus as the bringer of the divine likeness to the imperfect and immature race of Adam:

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar, von, H.U., *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Drury, J. (New York: Anchor, 1972), 354

<sup>68</sup> Barth, K., *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings*, ed. Smith, R. G. (London: SCM, 1954), 99

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *CD III/1*, §42.3

The image of God, and therefore the divine likeness of man, is revealed in God's dealings with Israel and therefore in the history of Israel. But it is revealed only as the hope which accompanies and supports all the events of this history, as the goal towards which it moves in all its multiplicity, so that it can never take a concrete form as an object of imitation by man. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" – this is the thought and language of the righteous man in the Old Testament (Ps. 17<sup>15</sup>).<sup>70</sup>

So potent does he find this theme of triumph that, in consideration of it, he bursts into lyrical metaphors of euphonics, which lead him ineluctably to Mozart.

1756-1791! This was the time when God was under attack for the Lisbon earthquake, and theologians and other well-meaning folk were hard put to it to defend Him. In face of the problem of theodicy, Mozart had the peace of God which far transcends all the critical or speculative reason that praises and reproves. This problem lay far behind him. Why then concern himself with it? He had heard, and causes those who have ears to hear, even to-day, what we shall not see until the end of time – the whole context of providence. As though in the light of this end, he heard the harmony of creation to which the shadow also belongs but in which the shadow is not darkness, deficiency is not defeat, sadness cannot become despair, trouble cannot degenerate into tragedy and infinite melancholy is not ultimately forced to claim undisputed sway. Thus the cheerfulness in this harmony is not without its limits. But the light shines all the more brightly because it breaks forth from the shadow. The sweetness is also bitter and cannot therefore cloy. Life does not fear death but knows it well. *Et lux perpetua lucet* (sic!) *eis* – even the dead of Lisbon. Mozart saw this light no more than we do, but he heard the whole world of creation enveloped by this light.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> CD III/1, 200

<sup>71</sup> CD III/3, 298. This question of the ordering of light and darkness is one that seems almost synonymous, in Barth's own thinking, to the music of Mozart (cf. *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* trans. B. Cozens (London: SCM, 1959), 12). Thus he could speak very similarly (and illuminatively) in addressing the Music Hall in Basel: "The Mozartean 'center' is not like that of the great theologian Schleiermacher – a matter of balance, neutrality, and, finally, indifference. What occurs in Mozart is rather a glorious upsetting of the balance, a *turning* in which the light rises and the shadows fall, though without disappearing, in which joy overtakes sorrow without extinguishing it, in which the



At no point will Barth allow that this is just a new sentimentalised apologetic theodicy, for he is not attempting to harmonise faith in God's goodness with the discordant notes of a fallen world. It is not that Mozart was simply composing his own bitter-sweet symphonies – he was voicing creation's praise, noting down melodically the ordering of God's Yes and No that exists as a fundamental character of the external basis of the covenant.

When it comes to man, then, we are compelled to ask why he is found in the state in which he is (that is, fallen). 'God created man to lift him in His own Son into fellowship with Himself.'<sup>72</sup> So did Adam fall, or was he pushed? *Utrum Christus venisset, si Adam non peccasset?* John Hick is one who cautiously suspects that Barth effectively did make *das Nichtige* logically necessary for his scheme of creation and redemption. The *culpa* of Adam was *felix*, for it took place so as 'to make possible the supreme good of redemption'.<sup>73</sup> Certainly Barth does at times come close to stating outright the inevitability of sin in creation, as when he writes that 'the creation of man is understood and portrayed in the light of his later fall and its consequences. There is already in his origin the possibility of death later actualised in connexion with his disobedience against God.'<sup>74</sup> Creation exists because of and for the Yes of the Creator and Redeemer. Yet, for that Yes to be precise and meaningful, it can only be spoken with a corresponding and opposing No, which is spoken for the sake of the Yes, as its necessary boundary.<sup>75</sup> Barth can even go so (worryingly) far as to implicate God as the *agent provocateur* of all evil: 'God wills evil only because He wills not to keep to Himself the light of His glory but to let it shine outside Himself.'<sup>76</sup>

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Yea rings louder than the ever-present Nay. Note the *reversal* of the great dark and small light episodes in Mozart's life! At the conclusion of *The Magic Flute* we hear, "The rays of the sun *drive out* the night." The play can and must go on, or begin all over again. At some level, high or low, it is a contest to be won; actually it is already won.' ('Mozart's Freedom', in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, trans. C. K. Pott (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1986), 55) Hans Frei has remarked on the effect this 'optimism' had on Barth's handling of tragedy (a concept that clearly haunts his Basel address, cf. 'Mozart's Freedom', 47): 'Unlike Kierkegaard, Barth as a Christian man and as a pastor was no ironist because, as he liked to say, God's "no" to men was enfolded in his "yes" to them. And the one form of imagination of which he really had little sympathy was the tragic – so closely linked to the sense of irony. "Titanism" he used to call it depreciatingly and wince whenever he saw it raising its classical or romanticized head'. (Frei, H., 'Karl Barth: Theologian' in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1993), 175)

<sup>72</sup> CD III/1, 376

<sup>73</sup> Hick, J., *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd edn., (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), 139

<sup>74</sup> CD III/1, 244

<sup>75</sup> CD III/1, 383f.

<sup>76</sup> CD II/2, 170

However, here we must tread carefully, for Barth explicitly expressed his dislike of the association of the words *felix* and *culpa*, censuring Schleiermacher for just this, that he had made sin so necessary.<sup>77</sup> So must we all, he believed, if we are to hold that the divine No is in earnest; and *das Nichtige*, as revealed in its conflict with Jesus Christ, is that to which God gives ‘an absolute and uncompromising No’.<sup>78</sup> To say that one cannot make an omelette (however cosmic) without breaking eggs would, for Barth, have smacked more of National Socialism than the gospel of Jesus Christ. To explain: *das Nichtige* is not nothing, in that it actually does not exist. It is precisely what God has not willed to be, but rejected and negated as a valid form of existence.<sup>79</sup> It is a real enemy with whom no compromise is possible, a factor antithetical and abhorrent to God.<sup>80</sup> It is misleading, then, without some copious qualification, to talk of a *causalitas mali in Deo*. If we are to give an aetiology of *das Nichtige*, then we must see it, not as the *opus Dei proprium*, but as the *opus Dei alienum* which is the side-effect of the former, proper work. Thus it can have no substantial existence in the sense that creatures have a substantial existence, but ‘exists’ meontically by virtue of its own negation (hence his reluctance to consider demonology, prolonged contemplation of which would simply serve to legitimate Satan). Akin to Augustine’s *privatio boni*, *das Nichtige* is the existing un-being, creation’s antithesis, the definitive surd, the *unmögliche Möglichkeit* (impossible possibility).<sup>81</sup> It is inappropriate, then, to speak of an actual divine predestination to sin, just as it is inappropriate to attempt the theodical task of describing, containing or excusing what is intrinsically chaotic, absurd and irrational, namely sin.<sup>82</sup> Grace is not dependent upon sin, and neither is sin justified by being necessary for grace. Sin achieves nothing. The relationship between the two (sin

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<sup>77</sup> Schleiermacher was decidedly unguarded in his frank affirmation of God as ‘the Author of sin’, adding only the qualification: ‘As in our self-consciousness sin and grace are opposed to each other, God cannot be thought of as the Author of sin in the same sense as that in which He is the Author of redemption. But as we never have a consciousness of grace without a consciousness of sin, we must also asset that the existence of sin alongside of grace is ordained for us of God.’ (Schleiermacher, F., *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart (repr. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), §§79-80, pp. 325ff.)

<sup>78</sup> CD IV/1, 69; III/3, 292, 310

<sup>79</sup> Barth here is drawing on a long philosophical tradition rooted in the Platonic distinction used to refute Parmenidean monism (*Sophist*) between non-being in the absolute sense of sheer non-existence (οὐκ ὄν), and in the relative sense of the not yet realised potentiality to be some specific thing (μὴ ὄν). It is the latter, meontic category that has commonly been regarded as the origin of evil. Jenson’s aphorism, ‘The last word about evil is also the first’, that is, that it will have no being, fails to appreciate the distinction. (Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 102) God’s work of redemption, we might say, is a transference of what is μὴ ὄν into the category of ‘being’ οὐκ ὄν.

<sup>80</sup> CD III/3, 301f.

<sup>81</sup> CD III/2, 146; III/3, 178, 300ff., 318, 351

<sup>82</sup> CD IV/1, 409f.

and grace) is one of genuine conflict.<sup>83</sup> It is just that that conflict between them is willed by God. It is of the essence of grace to overcome sin.

Yet if it is the covenant, and not *das Nichtige*, that is the presupposition of reconciliation and redemption (cf. §57.2 'The Covenant as the Presupposition of Reconciliation'), then we seem to have a clear answer to the question *utrum Christus venisset, si Adam non peccasset?* This might seem further supported by the twofold and contradictory nature of the creation, manifested in the first creation account's distinction between light and shadow, day and night, land and water, which reveals a twofold determination: an exaltation of the creature, and a wretchedness of the creature – the need and peril that his exaltation presupposes. The existence of the creation is thus shown to be one almost in free-fall into the abyss of nothingness, and entirely threatened by it. The creation has a subsistence, but one that is not its own. It is a dependent creation.<sup>84</sup> It has this nature such that it might be the realm of the reception of grace, being affirmed and justified by God.

Thus far it can sound as if Barth is singing from an Irenaeus hymn-sheet describing the imperfect state of the creation existing such that it might be perfected in Jesus Christ. The problem he saw with such a chronologically linear view is that it can all too easily collapse into (or of necessity be) too cosy a synthesis of good and evil. Admittedly, he can at times resonate with this to a certain extent himself, speaking of syntheses and the indispensability of sin.<sup>85</sup> Yet to label Barth so quickly as a Scotist in this sense, however, would be to rush in without sufficient acknowledgement of his near paranoia concerning speculation. When once asked about the necessity of the incarnation and whether it might have been different, he replied

I have tried to find the necessity of the incarnation out of the fact of the incarnation.... What I seek to avoid is a concept of necessity grounded elsewhere than in the reality of the incarnation. I also refuse to speak of possibility in the abstract. We can talk about possibility only from the *reality*.... There is no system of truth in which God is a prisoner.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> CD III/3, 333f.; cf. II/2, 170f.; III/1, 263f.

<sup>84</sup> CD III/1, 376

<sup>85</sup> CD IV/1, 373ff.

<sup>86</sup> *Karl Barth's Table Talk*, 65-6. 'The reason why God created the world and set up in it the office of reconciliation is because He was able, willing and ready to be one with the creature in Jesus Christ and because He did in fact do this.' (II/1, 515; cf. CD II/2, 122; III/2, 143; IV/1, 36; IV/2, 41. It is on this basis that Barth can assert more boldly than Irenaeus the freedom of God in creation (CD III/1, 13f., 44f.). To Barth's contention, Hans Frei added: 'Not only the possibility and the actuality, but also the



His language is that of epistemology, and yet is necessarily informed by his chronology, and it is that that has effected his revolution in teleology. The transformation his chronology brought about was to remove the temporal (though not logical) ordering of stages. Creation remains on the brink of existence, upheld only by grace. Its imperfection is allowable not, as in the linear chronologies, because it will be overcome, but because it has already been overcome in Jesus Christ – not ‘all’s well that ends well’, but all’s well because of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to presuppose the covenant before all else. Barth explains:

The atonement in Jesus Christ takes place as a wrestling with and an overcoming of human sin. But at the same time and primarily it is the great act of God’s faithfulness to Himself and therefore to us – His faithfulness in the execution of the plan and purpose which He had from the very first as the Creator of all things and the Lord of all events, and which He wills to accomplish in all circumstances.... As very God and very man He is the concrete reality and actuality of the divine command and the divine promise, the content of the will of God which exists prior to its fulfilment, the basis of the whole project and actualisation of creation and the whole process of divine providence from which all created being and becoming derives. Certainly the sin of man contradicts this first and eternal Word of God. But in the first and eternal Word of God the sin of man is already met, refuted and removed from all eternity. And in delivering and fulfilling this first and eternal Word in spite of human sin, as He would in fact have delivered and fulfilled it quite apart from human sin, sin is also met, refuted and removed in time.<sup>87</sup>

The event of the cross is not a mere moment of pathos. In Jesus Christ we do not have a subsequent decision, but the primary will of God. The covenant is God’s original

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need for incarnate reconciliation is simply to be affirmed as a reflexive consideration of the fact that it was actually so. For what do we really know of that need apart from or logically prior to that fact? Look at that huge mass or (to vary the figure) that cumbersome heavy artillery of theological reflection about “man” and “human existence”, so characteristic of modern theology since 1700! What does it all amount to? And who is listening? Do we ever really know, no matter what anthropological model we employ, no matter to what sources of individual or cultural sensibility we appeal – do we ever really know or apprehend ourselves, our neighbours, or the process of history to be in real need of salvation? Isn’t the natural evidence just as much in the opposite direction, except to the extent that we have already prejudiced it by a specific scheme for the analysis of what being human is like, or by appeal to a specific experience and sensibility on which we generalize recklessly and childishly?’ (Frei, 171)

<sup>87</sup> CD IV/1, 47-8

purpose in creation, and the reason for reconciliation. As we have seen, God's acts *ad extra* are not strange to his being but are the temporal externalisation of that which he eternally is in himself. As triune, God is a being-for-creation. That being the case, sin can only be a transient middle act, or even an interim, in the drama.

It was on this basis that, in his consideration of the Infralapsarian-Supralapsarian controversy within the orthodox Reformed theology of the seventeenth century (a discussion that, even apart from the genius of his own contribution, must still stand as one of the finest introductions to the debate), he could affirm Supralapsarianism as closer to the mark whilst going on to offer a third way.<sup>88</sup> Supralapsarianism's all-consuming concern for the glory of God was always in danger of relativising evil and giving him the appearance of a demon, not loving man, but only using him as a means to his own ends, only preoccupied with himself in his own private glory-seeking. Furthermore, in it a general principle (in particular, the Aristotelian principle that 'the first intended is the last executed') had taken priority over the particular person and work of Jesus Christ, who was consigned to a secondary role as mere executor of the divine will.<sup>89</sup> '*Latet periculum in generalibus*' (danger lurks in generalities).<sup>90</sup> Yet if Jesus Christ takes the place of the historic *decretum absolutum*, and if he, in our time and history, is postulated as the fulfilment of the covenant instead of the two groups, the damned and the saved, then Barth's reconceived (or drastically corrected) Supralapsarianism can be seen.<sup>91</sup> That is, God's will is neither the existence of the two groups, reflecting his mercy and his wrath; nor sin, the fall and evil; it is elected man *in concreto*. Further, it is his will that elected man should reject what God rejects, so revealing, corroborating and proclaiming the Yes of God in his creaturely No to what is repudiated. In order that he might truly stand in covenant with God, he must say Yes with him and therefore also say No with him. Yet for this to happen, and man to be an effective and faithful witness to the divine glory, man had to be confronted with what God had rejected and uttered his No to. Knowing, however, man's incapacity to do this on his own, God willed to become this man and in him to secure creation from all that threatens it. Instead of willing evil and the fall, God chose Jesus Christ, a sinful man who did not sin. In time, a history would corroborate God's divine No and Yes in a triumph over death, in a death and resurrection. And in all this, the chosen man is no puppet for God's glory and triumph, but God himself.

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<sup>88</sup> CD II/2, 127-145

<sup>89</sup> This can be seen most clearly in William Perkins' *A Golden Chain* of 1591.

<sup>90</sup> CD II/2, 48

<sup>91</sup> CD II/2, 75

The twofold determination of creation is not the necessary consequence of being a creature in the manner in which Irenaeus saw imperfection as an inherent attribute of createdness. It is so as the external basis of the covenant revealed in the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ. This is affirmed in God's having taken it to himself in Jesus Christ, reconciling its inner antithesis in himself.<sup>92</sup> In order to save confusion at this point it is important to note Barth's anxiousness to distinguish between *das Nichtige*, that which is essentially (if we may use such a word here) inimical to God and his creation, and creation's own *Schattenseite*, which is the necessary antithesis and contrast within that creation which is as a whole proclaimed to be 'very good'. That being said, he does hold the relationship between light and darkness in the first creation account to be (at least) a true and strict analogy to the relationship between the eternal Yes and No spoken by God in his election and rejection, and thus practically it is often unclear as to which Barth is referring to.<sup>93</sup> Yet to confuse the two would be to justify the former, giving it a place within the good creation and so giving it a foothold by which it might establish its malevolent power over us.<sup>94</sup> Rather in the same way as we are sinful flesh because of Jesus Christ, who defeated sin in the flesh, so the shadow side of creation mirrors, in creation, the victory which is the basis of the creature's existence, depicting that which has already been overcome by God in Jesus Christ before any other creature was and could be placed under it.<sup>95</sup> *Das Nichtige*, by its very nature, is a thing of yesterday, existing eternally in the past, having been conquered. Having been defeated in God's eternal electing Yes to Jesus Christ, *das Nichtige* has been shut out and removed for ever as a reality. We are left merely with its threatening after-image or shadow, and so left dependent on God.<sup>96</sup>

Far from the abstract plan of a holy self-seeking God who must use man for his own ends without really loving him, Barth has presented a brilliantly and robustly Christocentric drama of man that must thrill the reader with hope. Barth's chronology has so entirely re-shaped the landscape of traditional debate in this area as to render many of the questions within it misplaced. The existence of sin and evil is no longer treated as something separable from or prior to the existence of Jesus Christ, for the relentless consistency of Barth's christocentrism has entailed that the possibility and

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<sup>92</sup> CD III/3, 296

<sup>93</sup> CD III/1, 123-4

<sup>94</sup> CD III/3, 350

<sup>95</sup> CD II/2, 165f.; III/1, 133-5, 381; IV/1, 360f.

<sup>96</sup> CD III/3, 360-8



necessity of the incarnation can be found only on the actuality of the occurrence of the incarnation. Jesus Christ is the non-negotiable one, sin being ousted from its primal role into provisionality. As Hans Frei put it, for Barth,

not only the situation of sinning, but the doctrine of creation and of a primordial relationship of the creature to God are reflexive considerations of the fact that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. The former situation is for him the anti-type of that fact, the latter relation its figure.<sup>97</sup>

Through his assertion of the primacy and supremacy of Jesus Christ, he has managed to turn the entire tradition of theodicy on its head. Thus he has circumvented the usual accusation of the pretensions of theodicy (acknowledging that the only covenant that exists is the broken and restored covenant) and, by asserting God's justification of creation in the very act of creation, pre-empted theodicy's demand for God's justification of the world he has created. Man exists as the creature whose rejection God has already taken upon himself, and whose election stands behind him. In summary we might see what Barth found in the institution of the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3 on the first day of man's existence: the 'first thing in the time of man is that he belongs to His Creator; just as the last thing in the time of the Creator is that He belongs to His creature.'<sup>98</sup>

For all that, his doctrine of time is left to bear the weight of a number of hefty problems. Not that we should imagine that we have smelt blood too quickly, for Barth has inevitably opened himself up to critique in offering what is perhaps the most thorough Christian ponerogony to date. Milton displayed the difficulty for any theologian seeking to grapple with any form of primal chaos when he wrote the now famous lines about God using 'His dark materials to create', specifically, 'eldest Night And Chaos, ancestors of Nature'.<sup>99</sup> It is not just for Barth that evil 'is' only in an extremely problematic manner. Yet one can be given to wonder whether, ultimately, Barth has succeeded in offering a real alternative to dualism in his refusal to afford to evil any substance. Has creation's dual orientation in fact reflected a dual reality? For,

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<sup>97</sup> Frei, 174

<sup>98</sup> This being the case, Barth reasoned that the early Christians were not innovating when they adopted the first day of the week as their holiday (1 Cor. 16:2; Act. 20:7), the κυριακή ἡμέρα (Rev. 1:10), but applying the chronology of Genesis as they had come to understand it, revealed through the resurrection on that day. (CD III/2, 458)

<sup>99</sup> *Paradise Lost*, Bk. II, ll. 916, 894-5

in the same way that we have seen something of a chicken and egg situation with regard to Christ's humanity and ours, there can appear to be, in Barth's thinking, another eternally existent reality beside God, that of evil, determining God's Yes and No. Can God reject that which simply is not? If God has before him a choice of realities – even potential realities – then it seems as though the language of non-being has been reified to actually become some 'thing' more than just meontic non-being.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, in his choice of the term *das Nichtige*, Barth has sought to pre-empt such criticism or conclusions. And yet we might then ask if the choice of good (God's Yes) necessarily brings a correlate evil into existence (of any sort), implying again the co-dependence of good and evil.

Barth's simple defence is that he is playing no language game, and thus we need not imagine Yes and No having the sort of parity and interdependence that they might in linguistics. God's No is not the equal or partner to his Yes, but the boundary of it. Thus he paints a very different picture from Gnostic dualism: the evil side-effect is not creation, but precisely *das Nichtige*.

What is more concerning is that the eternal divine No revealed in Jesus Christ eclipses and engulfs the temporal fall of man as Christ overshadows and absorbs Adam. The effect could be that which first worried Heinrich Vogel, Eduard Buess, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Gerrit Berkouwer and Gustaf Wingren, among others. That is, is what Berkouwer called 'the triumph of grace' in Barth's presentation a resolution in God's eternal will prior to creation, so that, as it were, the triumphant clockwork is already wound tight in eternity, with nothing left to do in creation than work itself out irresistibly?<sup>101</sup> What is resolved in God's eternal will only needs to be 'fulfilled', that is, acted out on the stage of time.<sup>102</sup> Here is a world where Mozart, a Freemason, could encounter the antithesis within creation with joy and even a good conscience. If this be the case, is the triumph not a mock-fight, evil tidily wrapped up or synthesised in the system, so taking on the appearance of something innocuous, even tolerable, comfortable and salutary? For all its menace, is such a description of evil, philosophically satisfying though it be may be, too abstracted from the actual experience of evil?<sup>103</sup> If so, the system effectively collapses in on itself, for when evil is comfortably quarantined or its nature diluted or sweetened, the motivation and need

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Hick, 135ff.

<sup>101</sup> Berkouwer, G. C., *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Boer, H. R., (London: Paternoster, 1956)

<sup>102</sup> CD IV/2, 314

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Horne, B. L., *Imagining Evil* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1996), 43

to remove it is also diluted. As John Hick puts it, then we might replace the traditional *felix culpa* with a far more questionable praise song for the *felix Nihil*.<sup>104</sup>

That he could be understood in this way clearly distressed Barth, as he showed in the vehemence of his response to Berkouwer:

And is it really the case that the sting of evil is withdrawn when, starting with God and Jesus Christ, we define it as that which is opposed to the will of God, so that it is not merely later but from the very outset negated, rejected and excluded by this will, its nature being thus understood as perversion, its greatness as that of mischief, its power as that of impotence? Is there any sharper discrimination of evil or warning against it, any stronger recognition of its sinister character, than that which is pronounced with this definition in accordance with the condemnation obviously passed on it in God's own attitude towards it in the existence of Jesus the Victor?<sup>105</sup>

Read in isolation, such words are persuasive, and certainly go so far as to prove that he had no intent to nullify evil and its power. And yet, whilst on the one hand he can speak of God's No as the No to which there is no secret approval of a hidden Yes or original or ultimate agreement, God's No does define God's Yes, and so the nature of the cosmos as such. Using Irenaean language of God's hands, though changing the referent from the Son and the Spirit to God's *opus proprium* and his *opus alienum*, he sees *das Nichtige* finding its basis in God as the Almighty Lord.

He is Lord both on the right hand and on the left. It is only on this basis that *das Nichtige* "is," but on this basis it really "is." As God is Lord on the left hand as well, He is the basis and Lord of *das Nichtige* too. Consequently it is not adventitious. It is not a second God, nor self-created.<sup>106</sup>

Barth must deny the deity of *das Nichtige* if he is to affirm God as the Lord. And yet, it is not just that God's right hand knows what his left hand is doing; it is that his right

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<sup>104</sup> Hick, 139

<sup>105</sup> CD IV/3, 177. It is not as if Barth was left wholly opposed in this matter. He is not without his advocates even today (cf. McDowell, J. C., 'Much Ado about Nothing: Karl Barth's Being Unable to Do Nothing about Nothingness' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4.3 (2002), 319-335).

<sup>106</sup> CD III/3, 351 [KD III/3, 405]



hand is portrayed as so strong that his left is disproportionately weak, achieving – literally – nothing.

There is a specific example that serves to demonstrate the practical weight of the complaint levelled against Barth on this issue: his handling of the end of man's allotted time, death. It is tempting to allow that his overall chronology may avoid implication here, for in his handling of death Barth did not so much seem to follow the logic of his Christological method as baptise Schleiermacher's view into his own Christological scheme. (That said, his overall chronology can be said to bear similarity to Schleiermacher's *nunc aeternum* as the substitute for any telic progression or movement.<sup>107</sup> Also, Barth is explicit in his intent to derive the reality of human finitude from the death of Christ, the one who is before us in all things.) Schleiermacher had parted company with Protestant orthodoxy's contention that death, in both its physical and spiritual aspects, is the punishment for the original sin. Given the whole bearing of his thought, it is unsurprising that Schleiermacher replaced talk of death itself with reflection on the impression that death makes on the consciousness of self and God. Quite logically within this framework, Schleiermacher saw death not as an evil *per se*, but simply as the natural temporal end and limit for the finite existence of a creature. Thus Christ need not have been immortal, despite his being sinless. It is a consciousness of God disturbed by sin that fears death. Thus it is the fear of death that is the real problem for man: 'it is not by death, but, as Scripture says, by the fear of death, that we are subject to bondage.'<sup>108</sup> On the cross, Christ died both the natural death, and the accursed death of the sinner. In fact, the pedigree of the position can be traced further back to Pelagius' disciple, Celestius, who taught Adam's natural mortality, and even further, to Plato.<sup>109</sup> In Platonic thought, death set free, for gnosis could only be attained by the soul which had been released from its body. Thus, as Eberhard Jüngel puts it: "[m]emento mori" means "gnothi sauton [sic]".... This is why swans sing before they die – "more loudly and more sweetly" – not because of sadness, but for joy, because they will die to Apollo, the god of song, their lord.<sup>110</sup> Instead of Jesus' cry of dereliction, Socrates greeted death with a swan-song. At his death, Socrates offered a rooster to Asclepius, the god of healing, in thanks for the fact

<sup>107</sup> 'In the midst of finitude to be one with the Infinite and in every moment to be eternal is the immortality of religion.' (Schleiermacher, F. D. E., *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Oman, J. (New York & London: Harper & Row, 1958), 101)

<sup>108</sup> Schleiermacher, §75, 316, referring to Hebrews 2:15.

<sup>109</sup> Kelly, J. N. D., *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London; A & C Black, 1977), 358-61

<sup>110</sup> Jüngel, E., *Death: The Riddle and the Mystery*, trans. Nicol, I. & U. (Philadelphia; Westminster, 1974), 46, 51, citing Plato's *Phaedo*.

that he was being healed of life and liberated for the realm of ideas. He then received the deadly poison as a health-giving medicine.

A more dissimilar view to the general patristic notion of death<sup>111</sup> can scarcely be imagined than Platonic thanatology, and yet it was something like this that Barth adopted. That is, the time that has been given to man is allotted in a way that is appropriate to man in his difference from God. That is not to his disadvantage, but the very means of his affirmation as the creature. Otherwise, man might be tempted to believe that, in his temporal infinitude, he himself is God. Death removes everything from us in order that we might be left only with God and so come to trust him alone.<sup>112</sup> Our mortality, therefore, is only a problem if we seek to be God and therefore eternal.<sup>113</sup> 'Could there be,' he asks, 'any better picture of life in hell than enduring life in enduring time?'<sup>114</sup> Again, one is tempted to answer with a simple Yes if no further specification is made. His defence is that with infinite time man would infinitely multiply his guilt. Thus God, in his mercy, brings a salvation that is not a liberation from finitude, but a glorification of it. Furthermore, given the ἐφ' ἅπαξ of that redemption, we have to be finite and mortal to enjoy it, and for it to take effect for us.<sup>115</sup> The threatening cliffs of death in this way become graciously provided protective walls for man. Time, after all, is (co-)created, and God the Creator is for, and not against, man. Somewhat confusingly, given the appropriateness of temporal finitude for man as the creature, all this can be true because death as it encounters us is merely the sign of God's judgment on us. Death is not an inherent part of human nature as God created it. It is an evil that entered the world through sin (Rom 5:12, 14, 17; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:22). However, here we must look more carefully at what we mean by death. Adam, for instance, did not die and return to the dust on the very day of his sin. This was because there are two different deaths or forms of death – what Barth calls 'actual death' and 'death in itself'. When speaking of God's judgment itself ('actual death'), Jesus Christ is the only man ever to have stood under it and borne it

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<sup>111</sup> Pelikan, J., *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Vol.1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago & London: UCP, 1971), 153. The resemblance to Irenaeus' view of death as an evil contained by God for the further containment of sin and for growth in γνῶσις is somewhat different, and certainly intriguing. Both theologians have refused to accord death any final or absolute status, but instead sought to show it as a power under divine authority and so operating, ultimately, for the divine glory.

<sup>112</sup> CD III/2, 593ff.

<sup>113</sup> That said, it is not always made clear that the desire for immortality is sinful. He can speak, for instance, of life in itself by its very nature hungering for more life, terrified by every limitation (CD III/2, 587).

<sup>114</sup> CD III/2, 562

<sup>115</sup> CD III/2, 631

directly. Because he has stood under it, all that is left is the sign of that judgment – the frontier of finite existence that is the ‘death in itself’ that we experience.<sup>116</sup> We are liberated for natural, curse-less dying, in which, as finite beings, in the same way as we step at our beginning from non-existence into existence, so we step at our end from existence into non-existence. But if dying remains, what does redemption mean? It is that, this being the case, we can know that it is not just death, but the judging yet gracious God, the Lord of death, who awaits us, and that it is he who is to be feared, not death itself. Death is merely an aspect of *das Nichtige*, deriving its being from the negation of God’s will. Just, then as there is no god called Chronos, so too we might paraphrase Barth to add that neither is there any god called Thanatos. It stands as the necessary border to the blessing of God’s Yes. ‘The reason why His curse falls so hard upon us is that it is surrounded by the rainbow of His covenant. It is the dark side of the blessing with which He has blessed us and wills to bless us. Those whom He loves He chastens.’<sup>117</sup>

There are a number of other problems with this revision. First, in terms of methodology, is the derivation of human finitude from Christology successful? Not only does it implicitly speculate that Jesus might have ended his life in some other way than having to stand under death itself, but is it not reading anthropology off directly from Christology, a method he forbids? On this basis, might it not be possible, on the basis of the resurrection, to argue for an unlimited life for man? To effect such a revision of traditional doctrine, he understandably feels much exegesis is needed. It is in his presentation of death as an aspect of creation’s negativity that we see some of the more strained exegesis of volume III.

When, for example, Deut. 30<sup>19</sup> says: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing,” it is clear beyond all doubt that there are certain connexions between blessing and life, cursing and death. But this is no proof that death is intrinsically a curse, nor life a blessing. Death is intrinsically the end and limit of human life.<sup>118</sup>

Deuteronomy may not have provided the definitive proof of the intrinsic connection between cursing and death, yet it surely tips the balance in its favour, and cannot be so

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<sup>116</sup> CD III/2, 605

<sup>117</sup> CD III/2, 609

<sup>118</sup> CD III/2, 588



lightly brushed aside. Yet Barth goes on in Deuteronomy to read Deut. 34:7, 'his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated', to mean that, through the death of Moses, God showed the boundary of death to be wholly natural. Yet Moses' death is said explicitly to be a punishment for his disobedience in striking the spiritual rock (Num. 20:12). In a similar vein, but even more extraordinary, is his treatment of Enoch's translation or metathesis: 'As the New Testament explains, Enoch did not "see death." He stepped over that boundary almost, as it were, unawares.'<sup>119</sup> Elijah's being taken up is dealt with similarly. The real difficulty is that no substantial reason is given in these instances for reading the relevant texts in a way so contrary to what at first (and second) sight they appear to be saying.

Then, we might suggest that finitude does not necessarily mean mortality. What, Jürgen Moltmann asks, of angels or stones?<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, is this separation of the two, 'actual death' and 'death in itself', itself a death, the final separation of soul and body into psychic and physical consequences? And, does it in fact allow for any future hope in the face of Barth's sharp opposition to any continuation of this life? Gerrit Berkouwer put it that here there 'is not a separate belief in eternal life next to belief in God.'<sup>121</sup> The consequences are not merely eschatological but immediate, for the 'cost of this psychologising of the traditional view of natural evil, and especially death, was the loss of the sense that our relation to God is a life-and-death matter. The relation came to be focused on the moral life.'<sup>122</sup>

Finally, is Barth's repudiation of continuity anything different from the Sadducee doctrine that Jesus opposed (Matt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27; Act 23:8)? If the pun might be excused, it seems that Barth does run the grave risk of being the wrong person to take the sting out of death, which does not, in the end, seem to be the fear of death, but the cause behind that: sin (1 Cor 15:55). If a theology is to be constructed that equally acknowledges the real good of creation and the real evil of the fall, that takes seriously the reality of God's election and rejection, it must proclaim death to be wholly and consistently God's absolute No, with no hidden concord or secret Yes implied. It is only in the Resurrection that man can enjoy God's Yes.

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<sup>119</sup> CD III/2, 635

<sup>120</sup> Moltmann, J., *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. Bowden, J. (London: SCM, 1991), 139

<sup>121</sup> Berkouwer, 165, n. 81

<sup>122</sup> Pannenberg, W., *Systematic Theology* trans. Bromiley, G. W. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans & Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1994,1998), Vol. 2, 268

## Conclusion

To the question ‘when is man?’ Barth has given an unnervingly abrupt and radical answer: Jesus Christ. Time and eternity, past and future, even the Adam-Christ parallel along with shadow and light, are all found and reconciled in him as the Word and Head of creation. The end product, we have seen, is a creation teetering on the brink, not only of *das Nichtige*, but of chronic problems. It may be that Barth has finally managed to give some critical counter-weight to temporal being (manifested in his aversion to deification), and yet there remains a worrying Eutychian element at work that threatens to ingest any ‘when’ that there might be for any man. Chronos ate all his children, but now, in Barth’s thought, lives in the ever-present danger of being revenged in kind by Jesus Christ. Barth’s language of our participation in Christ’s history does, at times, appear all too artificially (almost, we might say, redemptively) attached to the core of his thought, even serving as a smokescreen for the fact that our history is just Christ’s history. The body is swallowed up in the head – a bizarre new form of the *homo incurvatus in se*! Given that it is *sinful*, finite flesh that Barth was concerned with, it seems only logical that it is not only temporal being that is in danger of being overwhelmed, but the nature of sin and so death itself.

It would seem entirely wrong, however, to end an appraisal on so critical a note. Here is a chronology that simply cannot be appended or treated as a philosophical excursus to the main dogmatic argument, and for that it must be given due praise. Barth has replaced what we might call a *carpe diem* chronology, beset as it is with the very essence of man’s greed, and leading, as it does, to the collapse of κήρυγμα into μῦθος. Instead, better than merely translating that into a religious *carpe Christum* alternative, he details a chronology that can be joyfully proclaimed: Jesus Christ, the Lord of time, has seized man. If we believe in God’s revelation through his Word, then Barth’s call for a Christologically informed, and indeed a Christocentric chronology, is one that we must take up, only with caution as to which Christological programme it is that we follow.

## Concluding Reflections

After six chapters of seeing two complementary Christological anthropologies, it is time to attempt some final resolution. It almost seems impertinent to sit as a self-appointed judge over two such maestros of theological anthropology, or to use their already meticulous accounts as a launch-pad in any sense. The ever-present danger of trying to go beyond them is that one simply falls, again, behind them. Barth's own assessment of Hegel we might justly apply to Barth himself, or, indeed, Irenaeus:

Only someone who does not understand Hegel's philosophy can miss its peculiar greatness. Again and again we find we must think three times before contradicting it, because we might find that everything we are tempted to say in contradiction of it has already been said within it, and provided with the best possible answer.... Could Hegel's picture, once it had really existed, be forgotten again?<sup>1</sup>

And yet, neither provides us with Holy Writ, as has already been made clear. True gratitude for their contributions to anthropology must then involve both learning and developing.

There is certainly much to be grateful for. For a culture that is increasingly fed by a diet of re-warmed Gnosticism, both theologians offer robust alternatives to the sort of desiccated, nutrient-free anthropologies produced by Socratic or Gnostic methodology. Following Pope's Delphic advice, 'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, The proper study of mankind is man', we can only conclude with Pope that man is the 'jest and riddle of the world.'<sup>2</sup> Following the counsel of Irenaeus and Barth, that ἐὰν μὴ πιστεύσητε οὐδὲ μὴ συνῆτε, man's true being can be known, not just as his own being in a Feuerbachian loud voice, but as a genuine revelation of his origin, existence and destiny that cannot be reduced, even though it is applied, to horizontal or socio-historical analyses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* trans. B. Cozens (London: SCM, 1959), 280, 291

<sup>2</sup> Pope, A., 'An Essay on Man,' in L. Untermeyer (ed.), *A Treasury of Great Poems* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), 532

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 7:9, LXX, cited in *Dem.* 3



### The Polyvalence of Christological Anthropology

Yet this has not simply been an attempt to prove the merits of Christological anthropology so much as a demonstration of the possibilities that are available when it is affirmed that Jesus Christ is the revelation and reality of the being of man. What we have seen is that 'Christological anthropology' is no single (or simple) project. Part of the difficulty in dealing with Gnosticism was the 'wolf in sheep's clothing' manner in which it utilised Christian vocabulary to articulate a gospel contrary to that of the Church. Christian orthodoxy was forced to draw its boundaries by definition of its language. So it is here. 'Christological anthropology' cannot be accepted as an unambiguous category. For what is meant by 'Jesus Christ'? The man of Nazareth? The Logos who assumed flesh? The Messiah as Head of and so with the Body of his Church? Even the concept of the 'eternal man', which one might suppose is relatively self-explanatory, is handled in strikingly different ways in Lyons and Basel, showing it, too, to be multivalent, and allowing, as we have seen, alternative definitions of humanity as conspicuous for their dissimilarity as for their likeness.

Both Irenaeus and Barth affirm Jesus Christ as the eternal, primal man, the archetype of our own human being. Yet from that we cannot assume, as Robert Jenson, Douglas Farrow and others seem to, that they thereby intend the same thing.<sup>4</sup> Where Irenaeus argues that the archetypical man can be found in the λόγος ἄσαρκος (who was definitively revealed in his incarnation), Barth, in his war on speculation, contends that that man can only be seen in the λόγος ἐνσαρκος. The importance of that fundamental distinction can be seen in the radically different anthropological products each model has generated. The implicit assumption, so normally held, that Christology, if it does so at all, should direct anthropology in anything like a predictable way, can be shown by example to be untenable.<sup>5</sup> A brief review of the overall difference in character between the two models should make this clear.

The disparity is to some extent rooted in what it is they are each, essentially, opposing, as much as in what it is they are each then proposing. As witnessed by the sheer quantity of its sects, Irenaeus faced what was in essence a cult of fissiparousness that thus, by that very nature, had no place for relationship. The hylic was seen as so

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<sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 37, 118.

<sup>5</sup> We have cited Eugene Rogers and Francis Watson in particular as exemplars of this (see above, p. 140), and will return to Eugene Rogers below for a further appraisal.

intrinsically abhorrent to the pneumatic that there simply was no room for a reconciliation, in any real sense of the word, to happen. 'Jesus' or 'Christ' or whatever ambassador or actor stood in his place could only be the saviour in the sense of being the donor of some epistemic package external to himself, the use of which would allow his followers to overcome the spiritual powers that barred their way as they sought to ascend to God. Rowan Williams, in his insightful comparison of the narratives related by the Gnostics and Irenaeus, called it a 'reduction of salvation to spiritual technology'.<sup>6</sup>

It has been suggested, by those uncomfortable with the 'physical' nature of Irenaeus' model of redemption, that the bishop failed ever truly to escape that reduction, simply replacing it with a mechanico-magical physical alternative that was just as devoid of relationship as its Gnostic alternative.<sup>7</sup> Yet we have seen how blinkered and atomistic a reading of Irenaeus that is, and one that can only remain indifferent as long as it fails to perceive what a healthy alternative Irenaeus' onto-relations are to the contractualism that James Torrance has shown to be so pervasive in the Western *ordo salutis*. The οἰκονομία θεοῦ owes its existence to the eternally constitutive love of the Father for his Son Jesus Christ, by which the Son has his being and by which, in the eternal fellowship of the Spirit, God becomes creative. Man, at the centre of that creation, lives as the glory of God – an expression of the divine community – in order that he might 'behold God' by participating in the Triune life of God, in the *Imago* and according to the *Similitudo*. Creation, for Irenaeus, is not only established by relationship, it is sustained and redeemed relationally, and its objective is to be united to exist in that harmony which is the characteristic of the love of the Father for the Son. Γνώσις, for Irenaeus, is not some tract of information or technique (which can only be called τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως); the Son is the true γνώσις of the Father.<sup>8</sup> Salvation, then – becoming man and becoming God – is reconciliation, an ontological salvation because of being the supremely relational salvation. The entire creation project is, for Irenaeus, a relational one, in which the Triune creator, his creation and men and women all grow into harmonious relatedness with each other.

Karl Barth, who was so instrumental in re-introducing and modelling the doctrine of the Trinity and its significance to Western theology, and whose

<sup>6</sup> Williams, R., *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), 26

<sup>7</sup> Cairns, D., *The Image of God in Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 104

<sup>8</sup> *Dem.* 7

anthropology was expressly analogous to that great truth of God, should, one would think, be similar in that overall relational tone. Yet, for all its similarity to Gnostic methodology, the *analogia entis*, at least as Barth sought to oppose it, was not the Gnosticism of the second century. Barth's concern, as the very ordering of his *Church Dogmatics* displays, was not an account of the οἰκονομία θεοῦ as such, but something more explicitly and predominantly epistemological. In his doctrine of man the same holds true: Jesus Christ is the revelation of man's real being; he is real man, and as such the revelation of the whole man, God's covenant-partner in his time. Our concern has been that the relational is in danger of being marginalised instead of being upheld by the revelational (not that we should even for a moment imagine that Barth had slipped back into old Gnostic ways of perceiving γνῶσις; that would be to misunderstand his christocentrism entirely). More particularly, we have suggested that there are elements within his Christology (leanings, as it were, towards both extreme Antiochianism and Alexandrianism) that have the cumulative effect of jeopardising man's relational being.

Yet surely, none of such criticism of Barth can be heard without a deep sense of irony, or at least puzzlement. Irenaeus' metaphor of the 'hands' of God explicitly directs the being of God externally, to the economy, rather than to internal relationship. In creation, Irenaeus did not see the *imago Dei* as the inherently relational concept that Barth did. And what of redemption? Again, there is much to be found in common between Irenaeus' 'physical redemption' and Barth's integration of Christ's being and act as mediator. Thus it is not, in the end, strictly accurate to refer to the schemes of Irenaeus and Barth as merely relational and revelational respectively. Barth managed to incorporate relationship where Irenaeus had not, precluding the possibility of one individual constituting the *imago Dei* in isolated splendour. It was he, and not Irenaeus, who managed to exposit so laudably and so holistically the concept of πρόσωπον, and so define man as a whole being in encounter.

There is one noteworthy difference between the models of Jesus Christ as real man offered by Irenaeus and Barth, and it is one that forces us to a dilemma. That is, when man has been rescued from his arrogant obsession with his own present, what has he been rescued for? Or, if we may put it this way, in which direction does reality (and, in particular, human reality) point? To the beginning, or to the end? Before answering, we must first acknowledge that both Irenaeus and Barth have sought to present Jesus Christ as the Alpha and Omega, and thus found a third way instead of taking sides in the mythological Greek war between Chronos and his eternal father, Uranus. Jesus



Christ is not like Jove, who, to be established comfortably as the supreme God (to be jovial) had to be rid of his father, Time. With Jesus Christ as the Beginning and End, man's being and history can be seen to be contained, neither coming from some alien source, nor with the open possibility of evolution into a higher state of being. There in Jesus Christ man finds a significance that he could never have on some abstract clock in which he occupies only the proverbial final two minutes of the earth's total 'day'. Furthermore, with Jesus Christ as the Alpha and Omega, the evil that man faces, participates in and endures can also be said to be contained, having no independent origin or future.

That said, there can be seen to be a marked difference between Irenaeus' and Barth's estimations of the temporal alignment of reality. For Barth, there is an effective orientation in all his thought to the past, and, for man, God's elective choice of Jesus Christ. It has been suggested that this is due in large part to his failure to give any actively significant role to the being of God in the third mode, despite his avowal of the non-identity of Father, Son and Spirit with temporal distinction.

Without the Father there would be no Son or Spirit – but it is not said that without the Spirit the Father and the Son would not occur. In every nuance of his formulations, Barth displays the doctrine that the Father is 'the fount of the Trinity.' But that the Trinity also has a goal in the Spirit remains a mere occasional assertion. This gathering to the past, to the Beginning in which all has already been decided, pervades all Barth's thinking.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst, then, past, present and future are formally held to exist in a proper perichoresis, the three modes of God's being and so the three modes of time are in practice distinctly biased towards the first mode.

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<sup>9</sup> Jenson, R. W., *God after God: The God of the Future and the God of the Past seen in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Indianapolis & New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 173; cf. Gunton, C. E., *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: OUP, 1978), 165, 185; Moltmann, J., *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. Leitch, J. W. (London: SCM, 1967), 37ff.; Colwell, J. E., *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford, 1989), 78 and 'The Contemporaneity of the Divine Decision: Reflections on Barth's Denial of "Universalism"' in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. N. M. de S. Cameron (Carlisle: Paternoster & Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1992).

He is the beginning without which there is no middle and no end, the middle which can be only on the basis of the beginning and without which there is no end, and the end which is based wholly and utterly on the beginning.<sup>10</sup>

It is, if anything, the other way round for Irenaeus, whose thought was pervaded by a gathering of all things to the future, to the End. What was, as created, imperfect in the beginning was meant to grow into perfection. Resolution, for Irenaeus, lay in the end, not in the beginning. 'Shadows', then, work in the opposite direction. Where for Barth victory over evil is something in the past recollected by the following shadows it still throws onto the present (creation's *Schattenseite*), for Irenaeus, following the use of σκιά in Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5, 10:1, the shadows are preceding, thrown onto us from the end. Where for Barth evil is a deviation from the Beginning which is God's election, for Irenaeus, evil is a deviation from the End, which is gathered perfection. The same dynamic holds true for man's being. Adam was the shadow of the one who would only be revealed in the flesh at the end. Where for Barth the creature's being in the *imago Dei* is an essentially protological matter, for Irenaeus it is only at the end that the creature, with his bodily particularity, will be found to be perfected in the *imago* and after the *similitudo*.

In this, two more different chronologies could scarcely be imagined, though both were, to an extent, tackling alternative myths of progression, from those of Gnosticism to those of modernity and late-modernity.<sup>11</sup> Both were rescuing man for a truly temporal existence, yet one spoke of a cosmic *Bildungsroman* (story of formative education); the other of God's covenant and its fulfilment. One saw history and time flowing towards the incarnation; the other saw them flowing, as it were, from the incarnation. Which would give man more real time and space in which to exist as a

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<sup>10</sup> CD I/1, 364

<sup>11</sup> Whilst it is Hegel and Darwin who are best known for their contributions to this area, it is Kant who articulated the most quintessentially modern myth of the fall as a growth from ignorance to knowledge. For him, human beings in their primitive state were novitiate animals, obeying the 'voice of God' which was their instincts. Yet when man took from the tree, he began to exercise real choice and gain knowledge, the adverse consequences of which would only serve to add further to that epistemic gain. Man's departure from paradise was, by their conflict with their own animality, the transition from that sub-human state to one of reasonable humanity. It was nothing less than progress towards perfection. Thus the course of human affairs is not a decline from good to evil, but a development from the worse to the better. The light of the Enlightenment lay always ahead, encouraging us not to foster the kind of nostalgia for the primitive state encouraged by the previous generation's stories such as Robinson Crusoe and reports of visitors to the South Sea Islands, their inhabitants apparently innocent in their nakedness, but to move on to perfection. (Kant, I., *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, in *On History*, ed. Beck, L. W.; E. T. Fachelheim, E. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 53-68) The similarity to the thought of the Cainites on the one hand, and Philip Pullman on the other, is striking.

being in encounter is a question that must be answered Christologically. For such different perceptions of the temporal aspect of human being were both, we have seen, fundamentally determined there, in Christology.



### The Promise of Christological Anthropology

So much for the differences between them and the breadth of Christological anthropology. What of their correspondence? Their very comparability, despite all historical odds, reveals the truly Christological nature of their methodologies. The disparity between them is simply an aspect of a greater harmony which the structure and argument has already noted. That harmony even encompasses such apparently jarring themes as their approaches to deification, for ultimately both stand opposed to the divinisation and transmogrification of human being.

Yet perhaps the greatest instance of their confluence is also the most surprising. Christological anthropology as a discipline (and indeed Karl Barth's theology on the whole) is all too commonly dismissed for its supposed abstraction and inability to deal with the physical and relational specificity of the humanity we encounter in ourselves each day. In practice Irenaeus and Barth prove otherwise. With their different, though equally uncompromising Christological methodologies, both Irenaeus and Karl Barth sought to provide anthropologies that were grounded in actuality as opposed to speculation or eternal principles hostile to the particular. What both found was that the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals man as a being constituted by and destined for relationship. This means man in the form in which he is actually found, that is, as the recipient of the life of the Spirit in his fleshly body, as male and female. For Irenaeus, this involved the application of the Son's eternal differentiation from the Father and his real appearance in the flesh to affirm the goodness of that differentiation that allows relationship, and its particularity. For Barth it involved an equally Christological affirmation, that the revelation of the real man as the head of his body and as the soul of his body is the revelation of man as a whole being defined by genuine encounter.

These two rare vindications of relationship and particularity for man have one, double-barrelled result. Essentially, this is an affirmation that man is as he is found as the creature created and redeemed in the image and likeness of God. Man is created particularly so, and (despite their differences over the doctrine of *θεοποίησις* or *ἀποθέωσις*) his redemption is not a flight from that, but the realisation of it. The first aspect of this is an emphasis on man's externality. Creation and redemption in Christ are things of the bodily, historical world. To be, or to be in the *imago* of the creator *Deus*, then, man is bodily. He is bodily resurrected as such because the whole man, as

Barth would put it, is called to realise the likeness of God. As Irenaeus and Barth see it, an anthropology that takes creation and redemption seriously must take man in his bodily form seriously. The tragedy is that, historically, so few anthropologies have. Apart from a handful of outstanding exceptions, the centuries after Irenaeus are testimony to the marginalisation of his thought, especially at the hands of Origenist theology. John Behr argues that the poor state of the now depleted Irenaeian corpus is itself suggestive of this, his work having been used more by later heresiologists than as an inspiration for the orthodox.<sup>12</sup> We will go on to suggest that surprisingly little of substance has changed post-Barth.

The second aspect, that appreciation of man's general embodiment does not necessarily include, is man's particular embodiment as male and female. The human external form thus literally embodies man's ὑπόστασις as a being to be found in ἔκστασις. Neither Irenaeus nor Barth allow that man's being as sexually dyadic can be trivialised as an inconsequential fact simply explained by the creaturely need for procreation. Human sexuality is a theological fact first, before being a biological one. This flows more obviously from Barth's doctrine of co-humanity which, in ceding to woman (for all her derivation) a constitutive role in the basic structure of human being, is the death-knell for Aristotelian-type anthropologies of woman as deficient man. Yet the theme is just as present throughout Irenaeus' description of the οἰκονομία: humanity exists as man and woman in order that they might grow together, reflecting in their creaturely harmony the union that the Triune creator knows and seeks to effect with his creation. Neither in his origin, nor being, nor destiny is man ever reducible to an abstract neutered *humanum*. As actual enfleshed bodily beings, we exist as man or

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<sup>12</sup> Behr, J., *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York: OUP, 2000), 218). Florovsky cites the Egyptian Audians as examples of heterodox retention of the primitive theology of Irenaeus: one of the elders found guilty of having strayed into heresy was one Abbot Sarapion, to whom it was explained that 'the image and likeness of God was taken by all the leaders of the churches not according to the base sound of the letters, but spiritually'. In bewilderment, Serapion is said to have 'burst into a flood of bitter tears and continual sobs, and cast himself down on the ground and exclaimed with strong groanings: "Alas! wretched man that I am! they have taken away my God from me, and I have now none to lay hold of; and whom to worship and address I know not."' (John Cassian, *Conferences*, 10.3; cf. Florovsky, G., 'The Anthropomorphites in the Egyptian Desert', in *Aspects of Church History* (Belmont, MASS.: Nordland, 1976), 89-96). It is worth also noting Tertullian's famously controversial words: 'How could He who is empty have made things which are solid, and He who is void have made things which are full, and He who is incorporeal have made things which have body? For although a thing may sometimes be made different from him by whom it is made, yet nothing can be made by that which is a void and empty thing. Is that Word of God, then, a void and empty thing, which is called the Son, who Himself is designated God? "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is written, "Thou shalt not take God's name in vain." This for certain is He "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." In what form of God? Of course he means in some form, not in none. For who will deny that God is a body, although "God is a Spirit"? For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form.' (*Adv. Praxeas*, 7)

woman and as man and woman. In our bodily particularity we can be seen to be beings in encounter, analogous to the God who is Father, Son and Spirit in encounter. As Eugene Rogers puts it, commenting on Barth's deduction that '[b]ecause the election of God is real, there is such a thing as love and marriage':

Married lives and the wedding that mark them sacramentalize the saying of Barth's, that creation is the external ground of the covenant, the covenant the internal ground of creation. Married lives and the weddings that mark them insist that that thesis applies even, and especially, to human bodies. Bodies are the external ground for the desiring love of God, and the desiring love of God is the internal ground for human bodies.<sup>13</sup>

This conclusion that Irenaeus and Barth reach is as original as their Christological method. Almost all of those sects that we now lump together under the title of Gnosticism were systems of salvation from the particular, from the bodily, and from all forms of fleshly difference. Rowan Williams astutely observes that this is the reason why

the gnostic 'gospels', of which a considerable quantity has survived, are records of *words*, not acts, located either at some unspecified point in Jesus' ministry or (very commonly) during the forty days following the Resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

The import of that conclusion can be seen through a demonstration of what together they can offer to the debate that must constitute the epicentre of contention for anthropology today.

To take man's particular embodiment as sexual as our example, whilst the influence of Aristotelianism in particular ensured a centuries-long tension with the fruits of biblical scholarship in the field of theological anthropology, it would be

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<sup>13</sup> Rogers, E. F. Jr., *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 270; cf. *CD* III/1, 318

<sup>14</sup> Williams, 25. Williams proposes that the practical application of Irenaeus' affirmation of the particular is 'to draw attention to the experiences of limitation, contingency, temptation and internal and external conflict as fundamental to the mature life of faith and growth towards God.' (Williams, 32) Given the context of persecution and suffering in which Irenaeus was writing, this is surely a wise observation. However, our suggestion (which Williams never disputes) is that Irenaeus has secured more profoundly basic territory in anthropology, namely man's very being, which is not only valuable in itself, but also can serve as a spearhead for engagement with systems contrary to the gospel he received.



extraordinary to suggest that we remain in the same place today. Thomas Laqueur has demonstrated what a change in western sexuality was brought about by the Enlightenment above all. The empirical evidence of sexually differentiated human bodies overthrew the classic philosophical denial of their essentiality to suggest fixed and stable foundations for universally applicable gender roles (which situation came increasingly under attack as a vehicle for male domination, but which Simone de Beauvoir critiqued most extensively in her denial of the secondary nature of femininity). Moving on from Enlightenment empiricism, late- or post-modern gender theories have sought to go beyond what are increasingly being described as the artificial strictures of sexual dimorphism in ways de Beauvoir did not imagine.<sup>15</sup> Extraordinary as it may be, and for all that it has moved on, today's situation can finally be seen to bear remarkable similarity to the situation faced by Irenaeus, in that it involves a repristination of the ancient denial of human bodily particularity. To illustrate this, we will take two examples: Luce Irigaray and Eugene Rogers.

When Luce Irigaray alleges that sexual difference does not exist, she means something utterly different to Simone de Beauvoir. Irigaray feels that women have been traditionally associated with whatever is derivative, with matter and nature, and thus have failed to be accorded true subjectivity. Men are the self-conscious subjects, women the objective 'other'. As seen in the language of Western culture at least, only one form of subjectivity exists, and it is male. True sexual difference (which would in itself offer the possibility of salvation and cosmic transfiguration) would require that the I-Thou dynamic be replaced with an I-I alternative in which there is more than one subject position.<sup>16</sup> Yet Irigaray's suggestion runs entirely contrary to man's being in the *imago Dei* according to Barth, and Irenaeus' affirmation of creaturely differentiation. If we are to take man's particular embodiment seriously, as both theologians suggest, then we cannot allow 'sexual difference' to be so reinterpreted. If anthropology is to be done theologically, even Christologically, such that man and woman image forth in their respective being God and what is other than him, then Irigaray can be seen to have proposed nothing more than a metaphysical dualism which is not only unacceptable, but incapable of providing a framework for true sexual harmony.

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<sup>15</sup> Laqueur, T. W., *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990)

<sup>16</sup> Cf. esp. Irigaray, L., *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); also Irigaray, L., *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993)

Our second example of a contemporary assault on human bodily particularity is that articulated by Eugene Rogers in *Sexuality and the Christian Body*. We have already seen Rogers' failure to understand Barth's messianic understanding of Jesus Christ: 'If Christ is the complete image, then the image need not be a dyad.'<sup>17</sup> With that in mind, he feels able to argue for more fluid definitions of marriage, gender and being in God's image. Thus, developing some of Bernard of Clairvaux's imagery and the idea of a sexual chain of being (from God the Father, to the Son, to the Church and man, to the woman), a man may have 'male' and 'female' roles, being part of Christ's bride, but also, for instance, being a husband and father himself.

Religious discourse works in a much fuller and subtler fashion than by supposing that one has to instantiate physically what one honours or even represents figurally.... So, too, gay and lesbian Christians need have no quarrel with the special aptness of the Genesis account of male and female and their procreation as normative for the *species*, as long as not everyone has to instantiate it to be in God's image.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, if Irenaeus and Barth are even close to the mark, then such fluidity negates whatever one does actually instantiate physically. It assumes that there can be a disparity between a person's internal and external being, so taking anthropology straight back to a version of the σῶμα-σῆμα creed in which the only difference is that the cell has already been escaped before death's final liberation.

Irigaray and Rogers are evidence of a decidedly ambivalent attitude towards difference and the body in a contemporary culture that is thus unsurprisingly awash with such problems as bulimia and anorexia. Irigaray, arguably the major post-modern philosopher of sexual difference, pleads for a differentiation of double subjectivity, which, quite apart from the metaphysical problems involved, sounds far more like a contradiction in terms than a linguistic alternative. As for Rogers, the denial of the supposition 'that one has to instantiate physically what one honours or even represents figurally' sits most awkwardly alongside his application of Barth's dictum, that creation is the external ground of the covenant, the covenant the internal ground of creation, to bodies and gender.

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<sup>17</sup> Rogers, 225

<sup>18</sup> Rogers, 243

Into this situation Irenaeus and Barth, in their different ways, speak a gospel to man as a whole being. He may (indeed he must) live and love as the bodily particularity that he is. Femininity and the body are neither hidden away behind a veil of embarrassment (as they must be to any Aristotelian or Gnostic), nor transcended, but embraced for what they are, as part of a broader understanding of God's own being and his relationship with humanity and creation. 'He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.' (Ephesians 5:28-30)

As God has made his loving approach to man bodily, so he has inscribed that on our bodies, such that man's corresponding love for his creator and his neighbour is an embodied love, a relationship of the flesh. Having been created thus in the *imago Dei*, our bodies are in actual fact, whatever attempts we might make, finally inalienable. Eugene Rogers suggests ἔρωσ as one example of this:

The bodies of the desired do not leave even the most devoted misanthrope alone. Rather, inscribed in him or her, inescapably, is the claim of the neighbor, even if wounds and cries may have ceased to move compassion. Eros is both inscribed in the image and the last stand of God in human beings, that they might never entirely escape the image of God in their neighbors, however much their powerlessness and vulnerability before that image may distort them into anger, adultery and murder.<sup>19</sup>

Does this mean that Nygren's famous distinction between ἀγάπη and ἔρωσ has to be seen as the overwrought result of a deeply ingrained denigration of the body?<sup>20</sup> Can we speak of the gospel as 'a story of carnal desire and erotic encounter'?<sup>21</sup> Not too blithely, it has to be said, given the association of ἔρωσ in Hellenic thought with mystical, anthropocentric attempts at self-transcendence. That said, duly cautioned, there may still be some merit in Gregory of Nyssa's description of it as the flowering of

<sup>19</sup> Rogers, 227. Gerard Loughlin suggests that this can be shown to be so historically, since 'paradoxically, even as Christians put aside their sexual wants in pursuit of spiritual gratification, their bodies remained as the measure and, later, the figure of their mystical devotion. The ascetics of the fourth and fifth centuries who went into the desert to find their God, also found the deep sexuality of their bodies, that could always return to ground their spiritual ascents.' (Loughlin, G., *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 9)

<sup>20</sup> Nygren, A., *Agape and Eros*, trans. P. S. Watson (London: SPCK, 1953); cf. Watson, F., *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 208, 259. For a recent critique of Nygren's distinction, approached somewhat differently, see Jenson, R. W., *On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions* (Grand Rapids, MI. & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 76-7.

<sup>21</sup> Loughlin, 12



ἀγάπη, exhibited in the relationship between Christ and his beloved Church.<sup>22</sup> As long as we maintain an Augustinian realism about sin, we can safely maintain that relationships of the flesh are the very stuff of man's eucharistic existence. Only in such particular relationships, when they make time and space for each other as God has done for them, do human beings in God's image really display his likeness.

However, the greatest contribution that Irenaeus and Barth offer to anthropology is their most basic one, and it is with that that we must draw to a close. Perhaps it is fitting, if surprising, that we should turn to it, as we finish, through the words of Ludwig Feuerbach. His apotheosising of the I-Thou dialectic and the usual, crude interpretation of his aphorism *der Mensch ist, was er ißt* make him a soft target for Christian anti-materialism.<sup>23</sup> Yet his understanding of man as a being to be found only in community, and his (albeit monistic) sensuousness that refuses to idealise man, together bear an intriguing echo of the anthropology we have tried to show as being in the world, but not of it. And, as Alexander Schmemmann has suggested, there is a yet more fundamental, if unintended, truth underlying Feuerbach's dictum: from the instruction to eat that immediately follows the command to propagate and have dominion (Gen. 1:28-30), we humans can be seen, as Irenaeus saw Adam, to be hungry creatures.<sup>24</sup> We find our fulfilment and our true being in feeding upon Christ, the true man.

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<sup>22</sup> *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily 13, trans. C. McCambley (Brookline, MA.: Hellenic College Press, 1987), 234

<sup>23</sup> Feuerbach, L., *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, intro. Karl Barth (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957); cf. Barth's comments in the introduction, xiii-xiv.

<sup>24</sup> Schmemmann, A., *For the Life of the World* (New York: SVS, 1997), 11ff.

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